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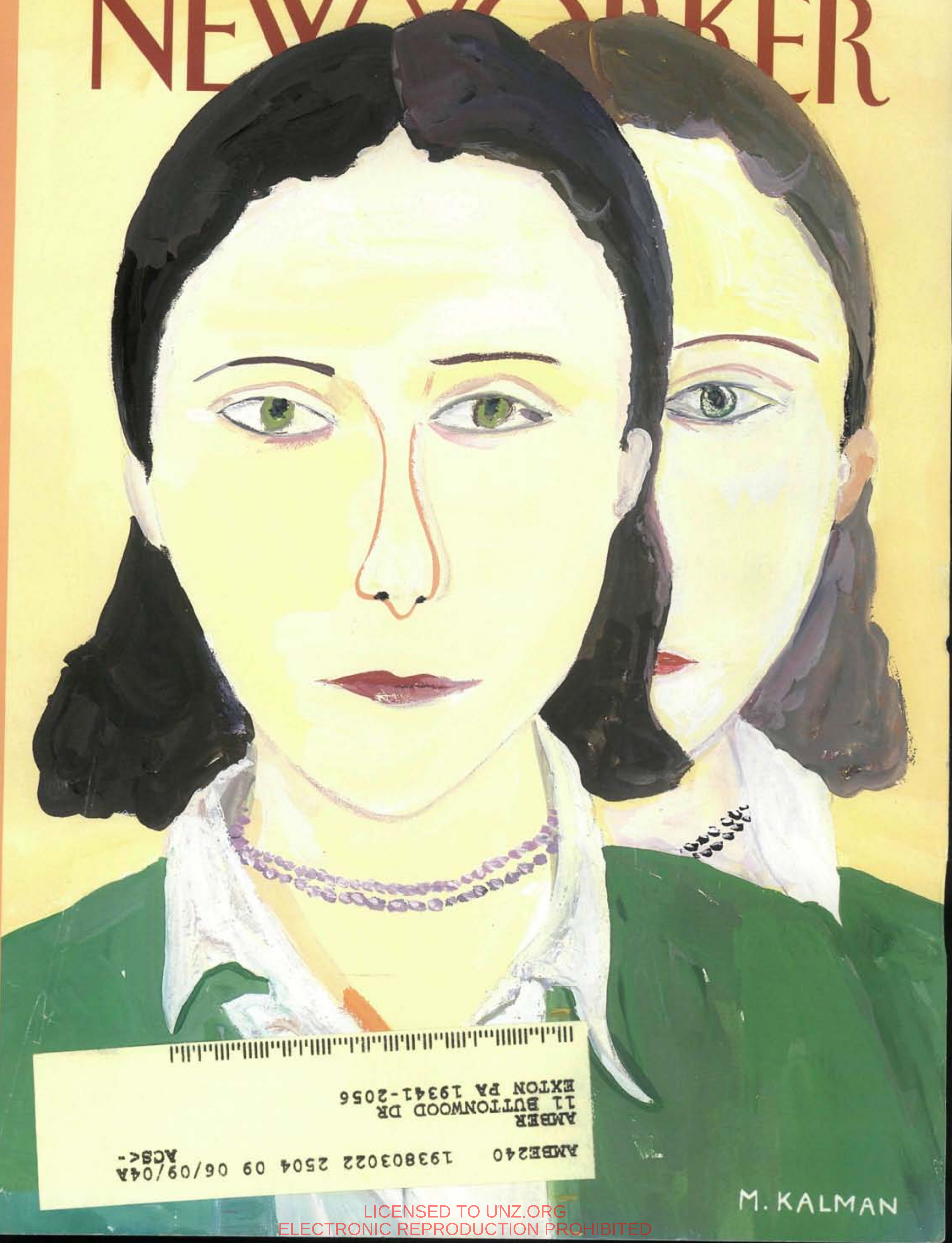
THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 14 & 21, 2004



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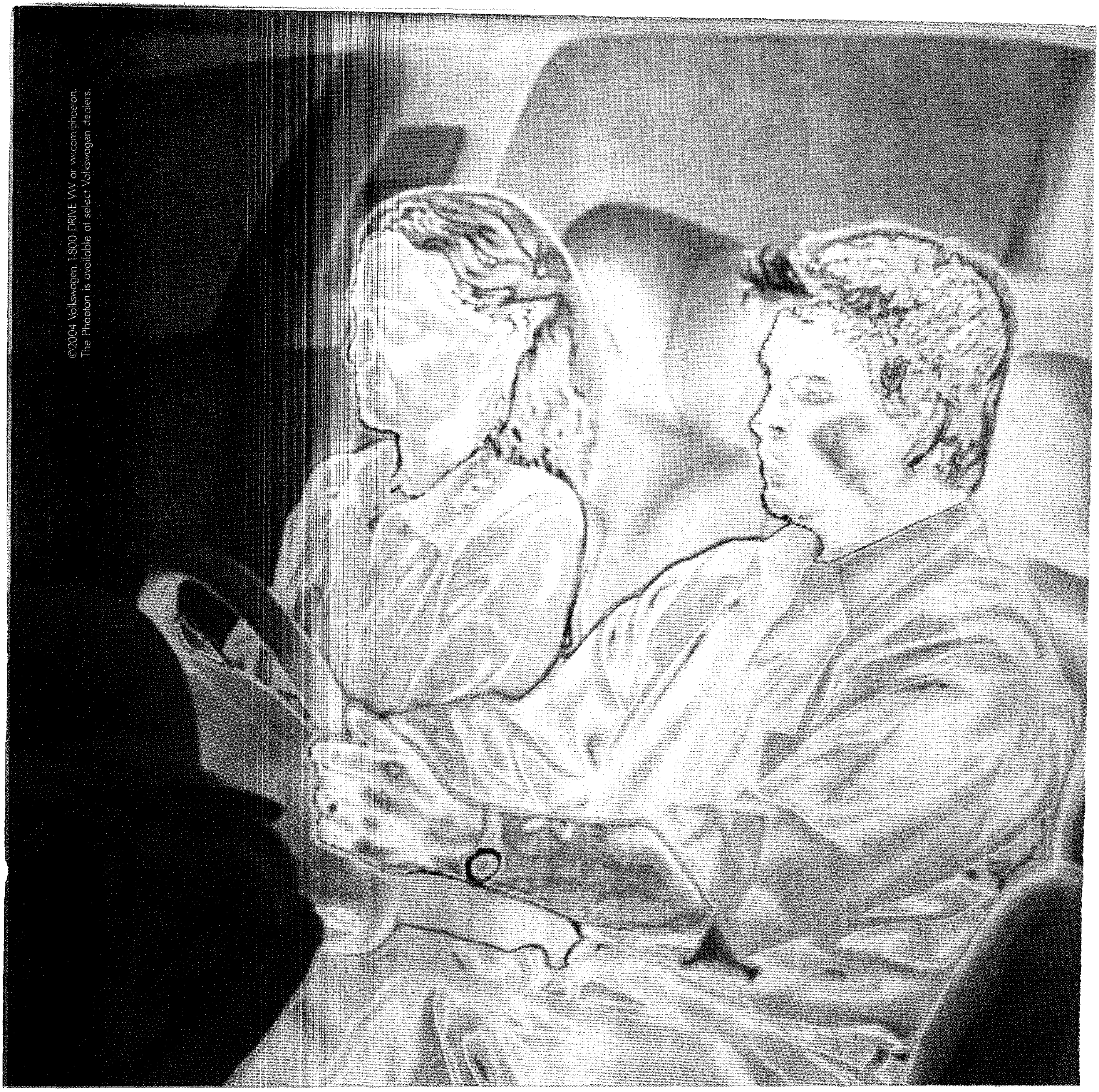
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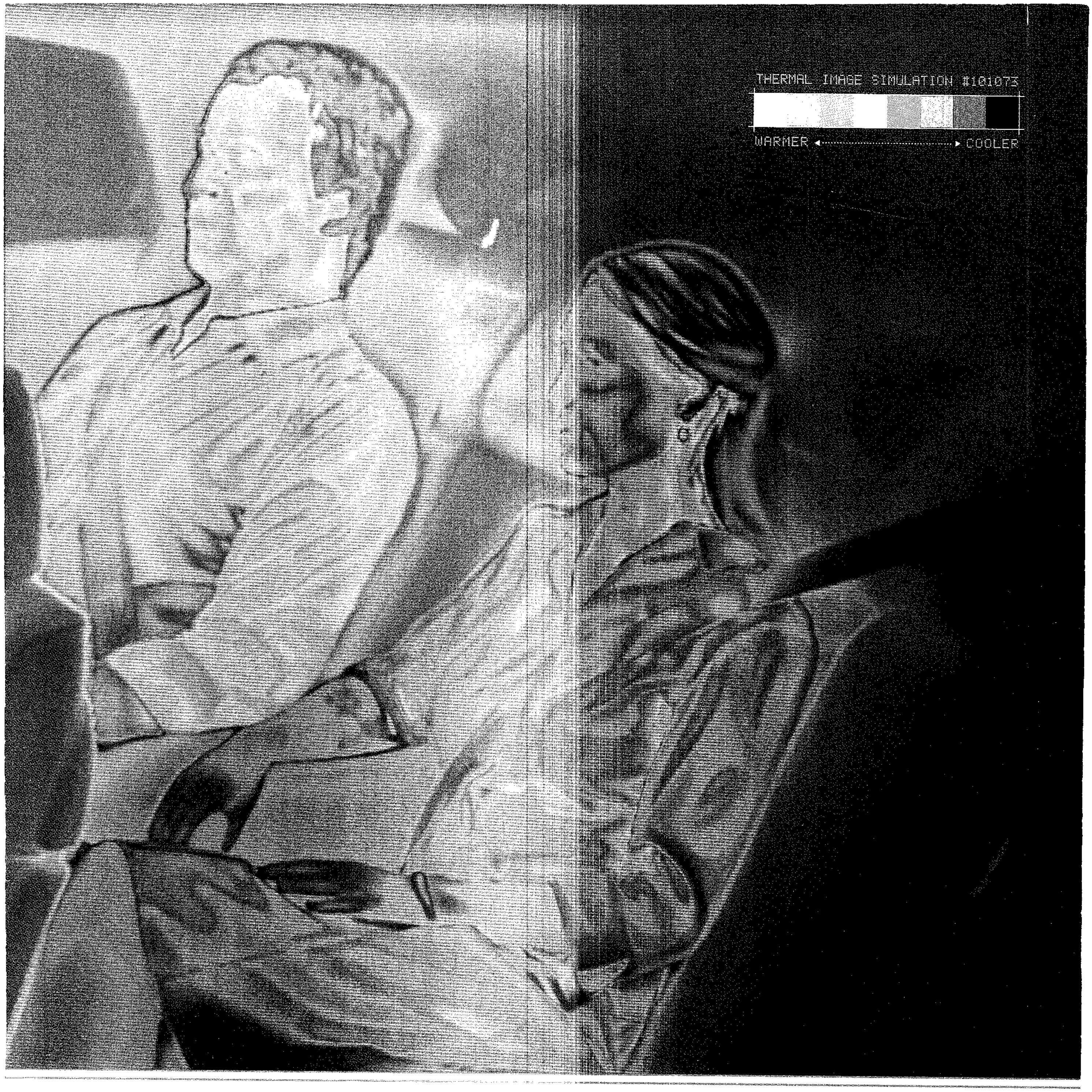

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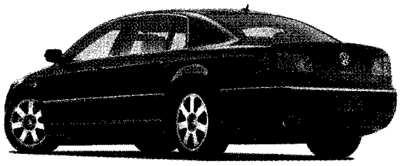

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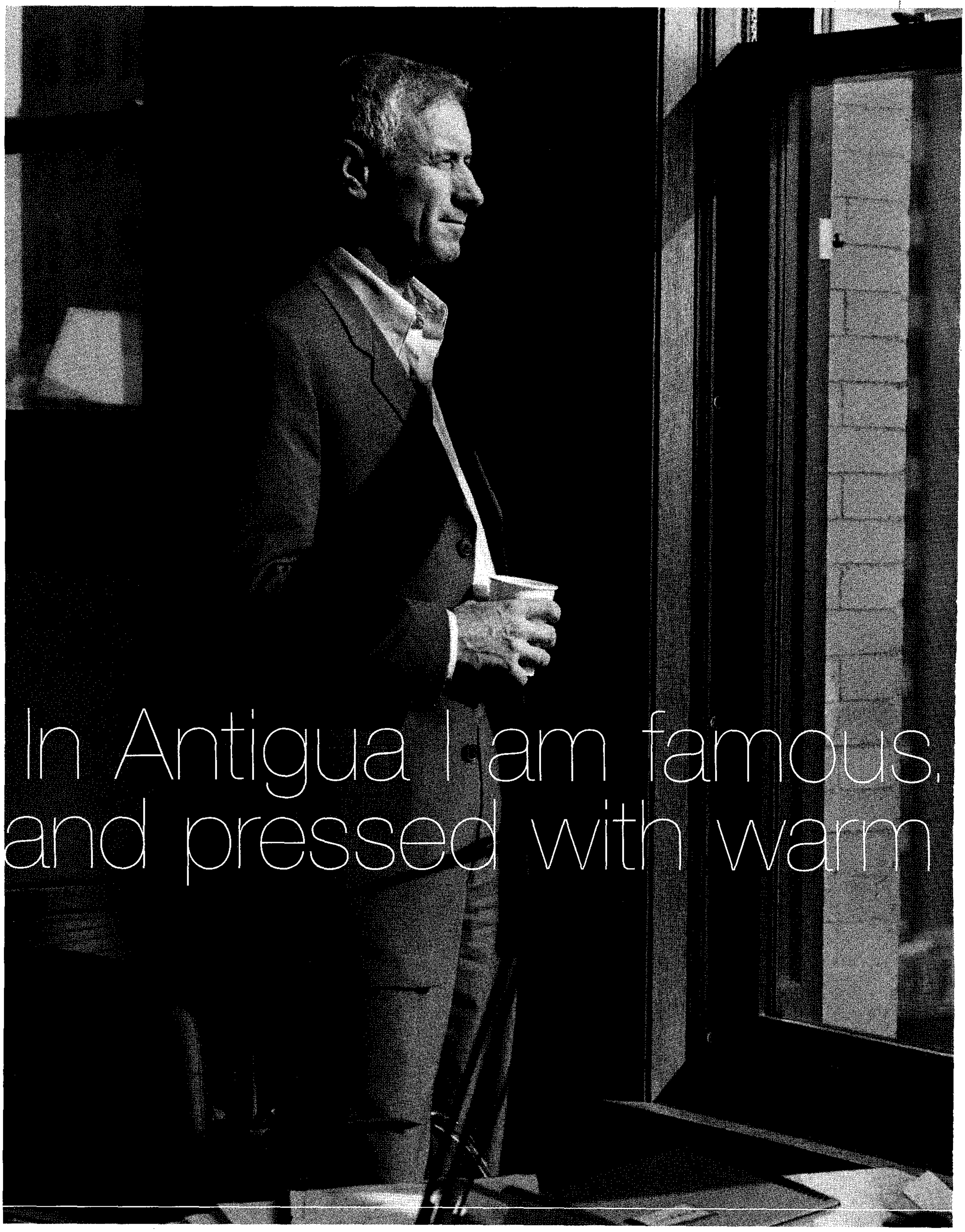
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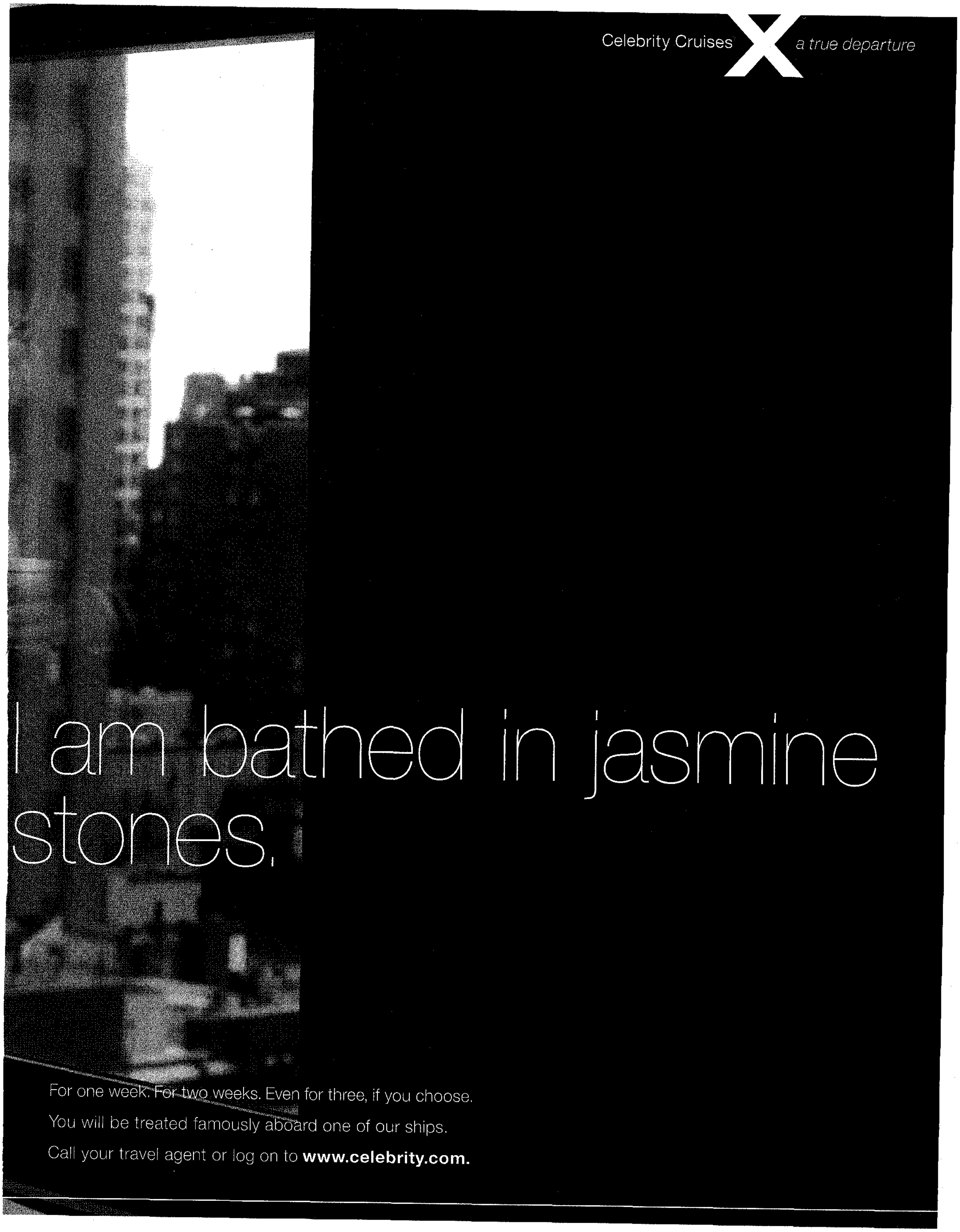

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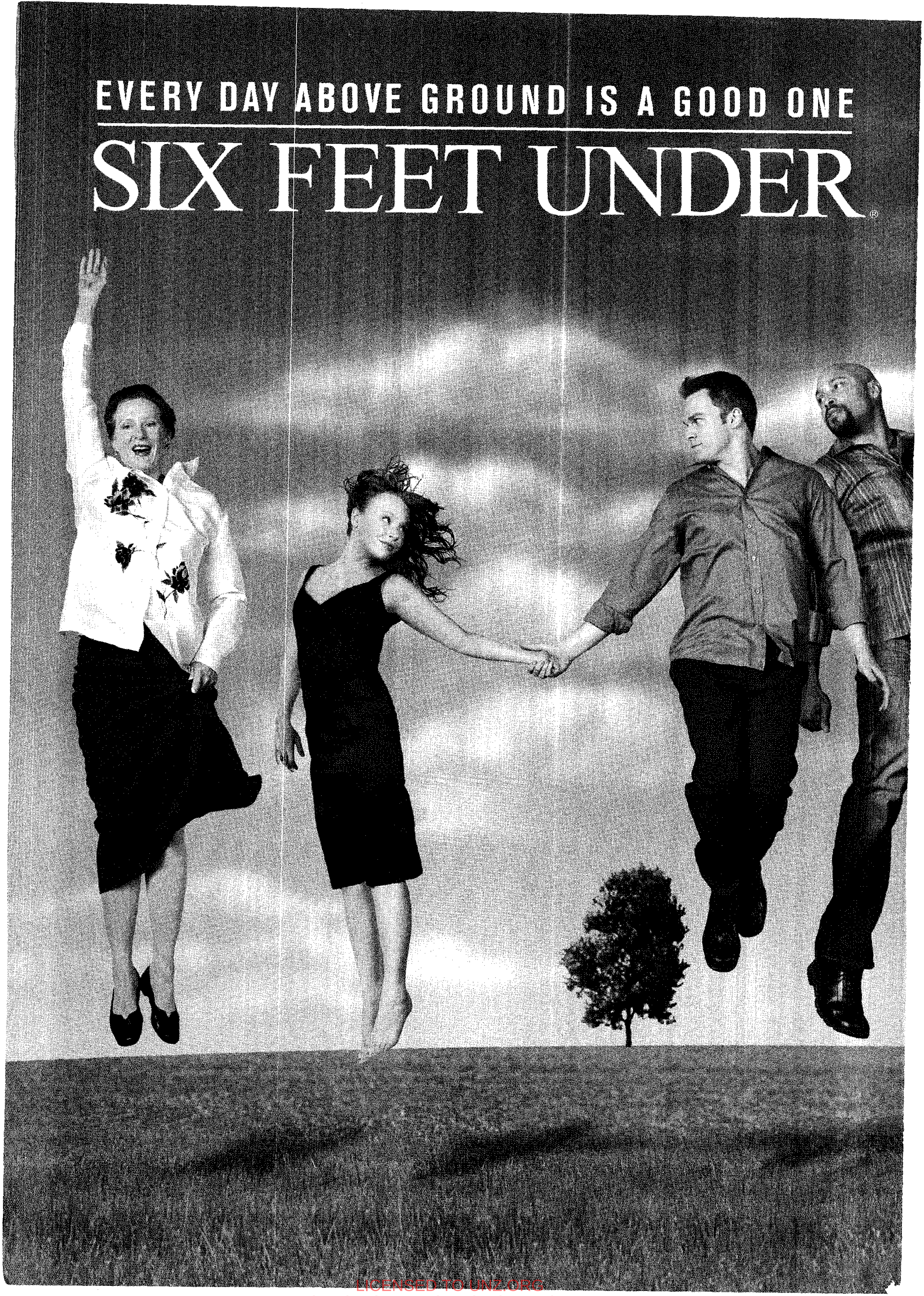
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CONTRIBUTORS

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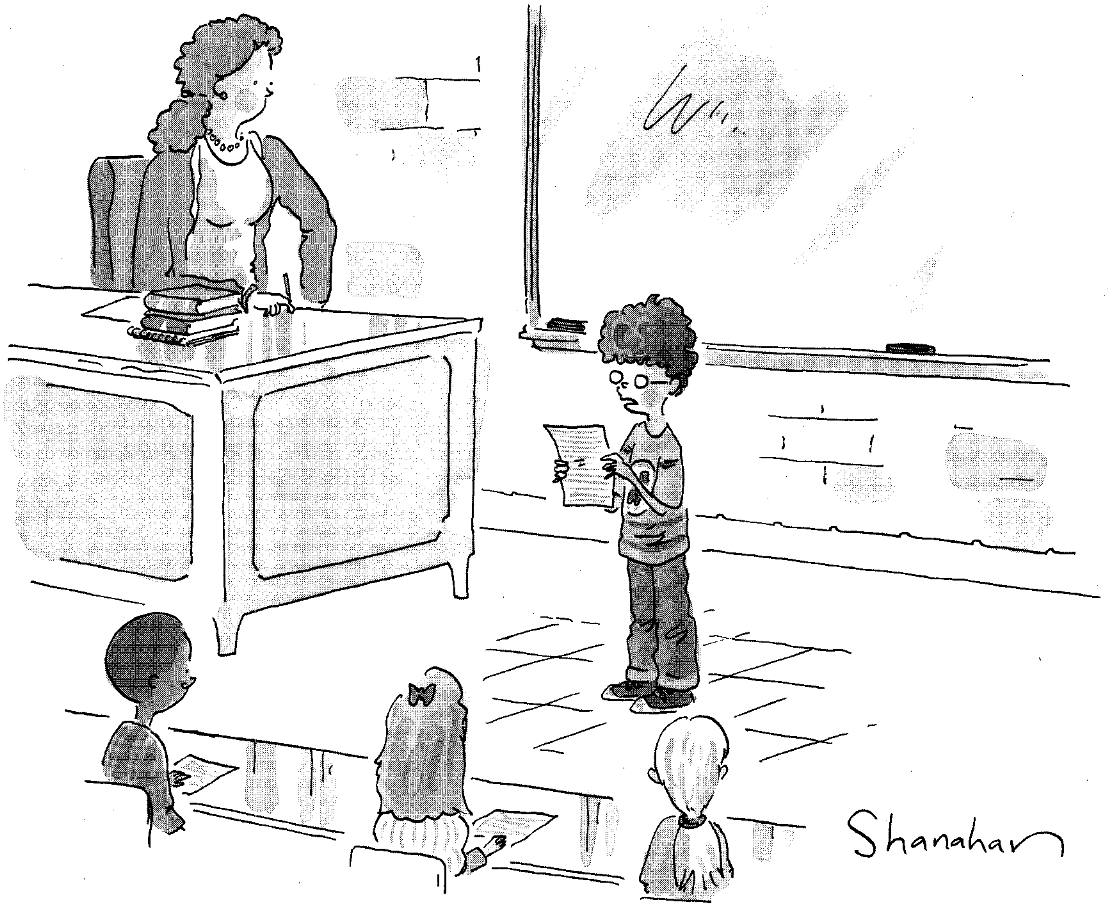
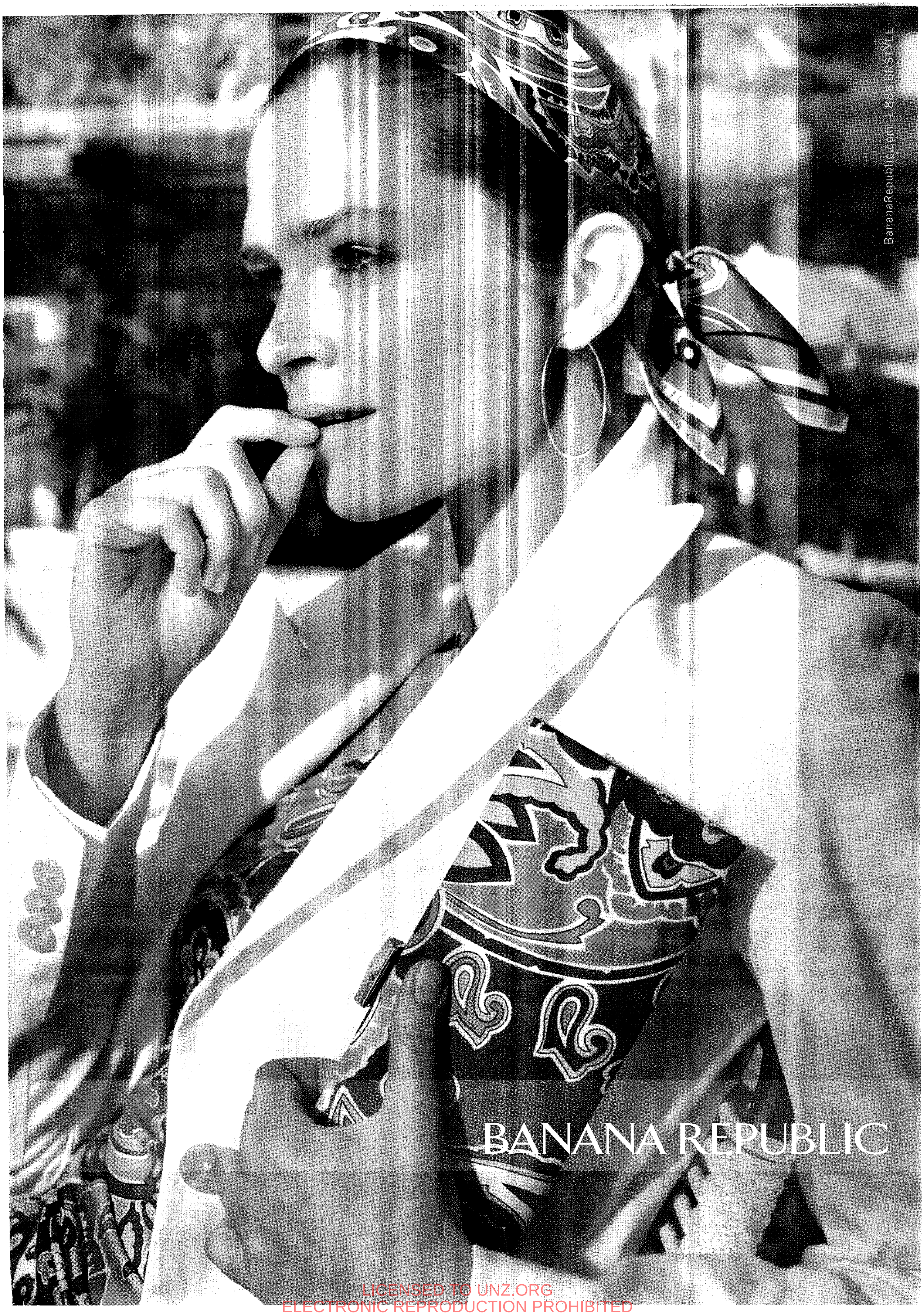
Susan Orlean ("Out of the Woods," p. 206), a staff writer, is working on a biography of Rin Tin Tin.

Maira Kalman (Cover) is a writer and illustrator whose children's books include "Smartypants: Pete in School." ♦



" 'What I Did on My Summer Vacation—A Prequel.' "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THE MAIL

A CALL ON 9/11

Elizabeth Kolbert, writing about the alleged "confusion" surrounding the activation of the signal booster at the World Trade Center on September 11th, states, "In the early moments of the disaster, a fire chief who didn't know how to activate the device decided—mistakenly—that it was malfunctioning, a decision that may have cost some rescue workers their lives" (Comment, May 31st). In fact, the fire chief to whom she refers was extremely familiar with the system, having responded to many prior calls at the W.T.C. When he entered the lobby that day, he did what he always did: he asked a building deputy fire-safety director, who was also familiar with the system, to activate it. Another deputy fire-safety director who was present has confirmed that the system was turned on. Thereafter, this chief attempted to communicate with another chief, who was also expert in the system (and died that day). He was unable to do so, and concluded that the system was malfunctioning. (The F.D.N.Y. disputes the preliminary finding of the 9/11 Commission that the repeater was working properly, and will continue to work with the commission to correct this error.)

The two chiefs thus decided to rely on the department's handie-talkie radios and their two operating channels (tactical and command). Although not perfect, messages were getting through to units on the upper floors. The irony is that this critical decision actually saved lives. When the south tower collapsed, the repeater system—even if it had been working earlier—was destroyed. Had it been in use, all communications between firefighters in the still-standing north tower would have ceased. Instead, the chief, who had continued to communicate successfully, was able to issue a quick evacuation order on the command and tactical channels to firefighters in the north tower. Many firefighters heard this order and heeded it. Unlike the speculation about the malfunctioning repeater, and what might have been, we know that that order saved many firefighters' lives. How do we know? Because they are alive today and have said so.

Nicholas Scoppetta
Fire Commissioner, City of New York
New York City

THE SAILOR FROM VERMONT

Paul Goldberger asks why the design of the National World War II Memorial refers to the fifty states and territories, writing that soldiers were not grouped by states "and did not, I suspect, particularly identify with them" (The Sky Line, May 31st). But the state from which you came was very important to many troops—especially for the state National Guard units mobilized in 1941. In the Navy, where I served, we always sought shipmates from our home states. As a Vermonter, I stencilled "VT" with bleach in large letters on the back of my dungaree jacket. Before the war, most Americans stayed close to home. The jumble the war caused when it suddenly scattered sixteen million of them across the world still hasn't been fully resolved.

Allan G. LeBaron
Moulton, Ala.

IMAGES OF WAR

As an Episcopal priest who served for years as a chaplain in the United States Army, I was offended by the May 24th cover illustration: an American soldier with a target on his back ("Army of One," by Raul Colón). I know soldiers. I have shared life, hardship, and combat with them. I know what it is to be a target. However one may feel about the war, the image evokes a reality that is too grim to use lightly. It is irresponsible, and an affront to women and men in uniform. Your political point is made, but at what price?

The Reverend J. Wesley Smith
Macon, Ga.

•

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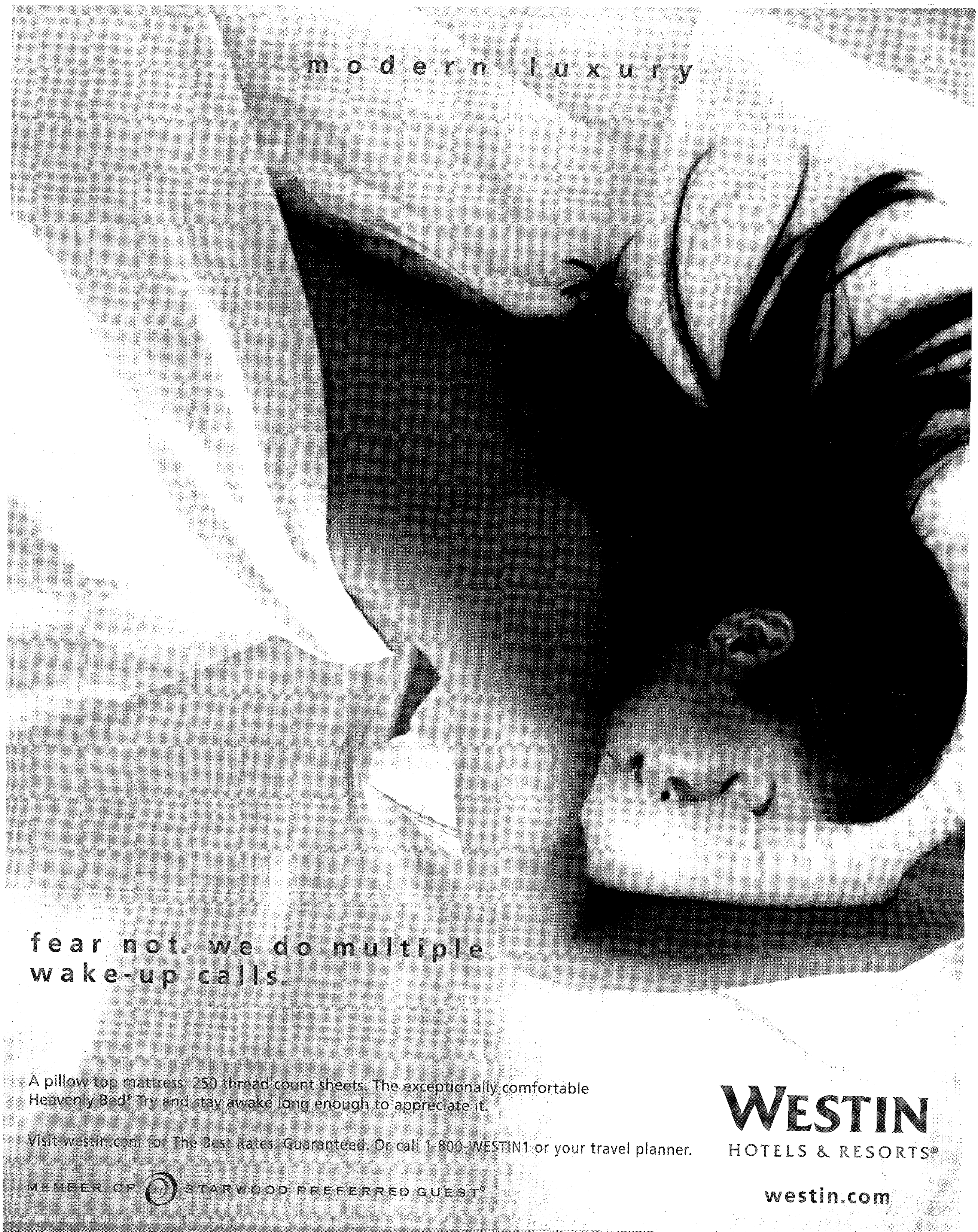

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The Sigma platform is bestowed with an unusual versatility, proving to be both functional and agile. SRX is a telling example. This is a utility that can seat seven.* But due to its grounding in the Sigma platform, SRX V8 acts unlike any ordinary utility. With a 320-hp V8, it is athletic in both power and prowess.

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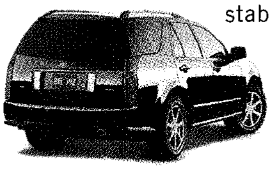

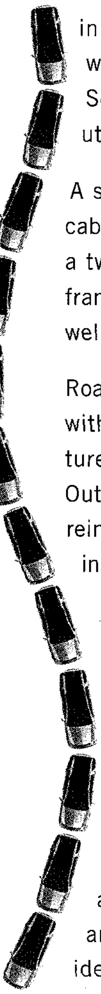

A stiff structure also contributes to a secure cabin. The instrument panel structure in SRX uses a two-piece, cross-vehicle, magnesium-casted frame. This rigid, integrated foundation performs well in front and side impacts.

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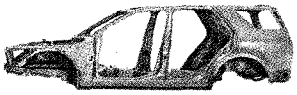

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK ON THE MARK

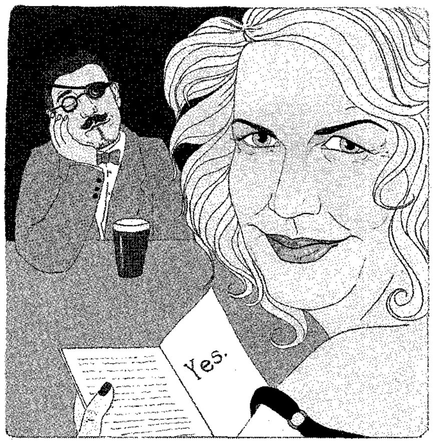
For some choreographers, music is merely accompaniment. Not so for Mark Morris, who treats each score as the skeleton that makes the flesh dance. Two large-scale Morris works première at BAM this week: "All Fours," set to Bartók's String Quartet No. 4, and "Violet Cavern," set to a score commissioned from the willfully eclectic jazz trio the Bad Plus. Morris describes the jazz score as "loud and clumsy and fabulous," but he approaches its seven movements no less rigorously than he does Bartók's five. (June 8 and June 10-12; see Dance.)

KIDNEYS WERE IN HIS MIND

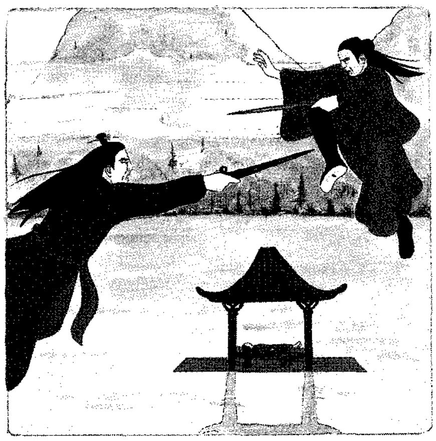
Leopold Bloom started wandering the streets of Dublin a hundred years ago this June 16, delighting readers and sending untold numbers of English majors into fits of self-recrimination: to many, "Ulysses" is the greatest book they've never read. "Bloomsday on Broadway," Symphony Space's annual celebration of Joyce's masterwork, enlists various actors and writers. This year, Stephen Colbert, Fionnula Flanagan, Frank McCourt, Frances Sternhagen, and others do the honors. (See Above and Beyond.)

BATTLE ROYALE

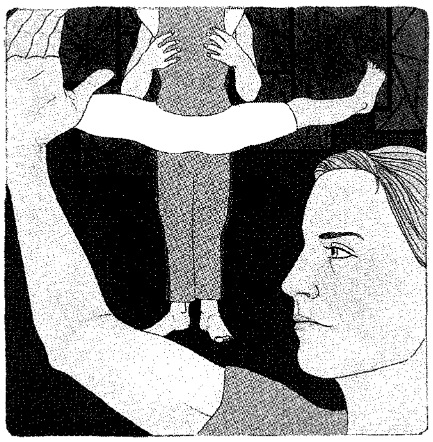
Martial arts in the movies are raised to new balletic heights in Zhang Yimou's "Hero," the opening film of the New York Asian Film Festival, for which the director teamed up with the choreographer Ching Siu-tung and the cinematographer Christopher Doyle. Two of the aerial scenes in the film—a fight over a mountain lake and a duel in an autumn orchard between two women—are already legendary. And the actors Jet Li and Zhang Ziyi, who have both appeared in more conventional action epics, have an athletic poise not generally seen in American actors. "Hero" is an ambiguous tale about the limits of rebellion—which character is the hero is anyone's guess. (Anthology Film Archives, June 18; see Movies.)



"Bloomsday on Broadway" salutes James Joyce's "Ulysses," at Symphony Space.

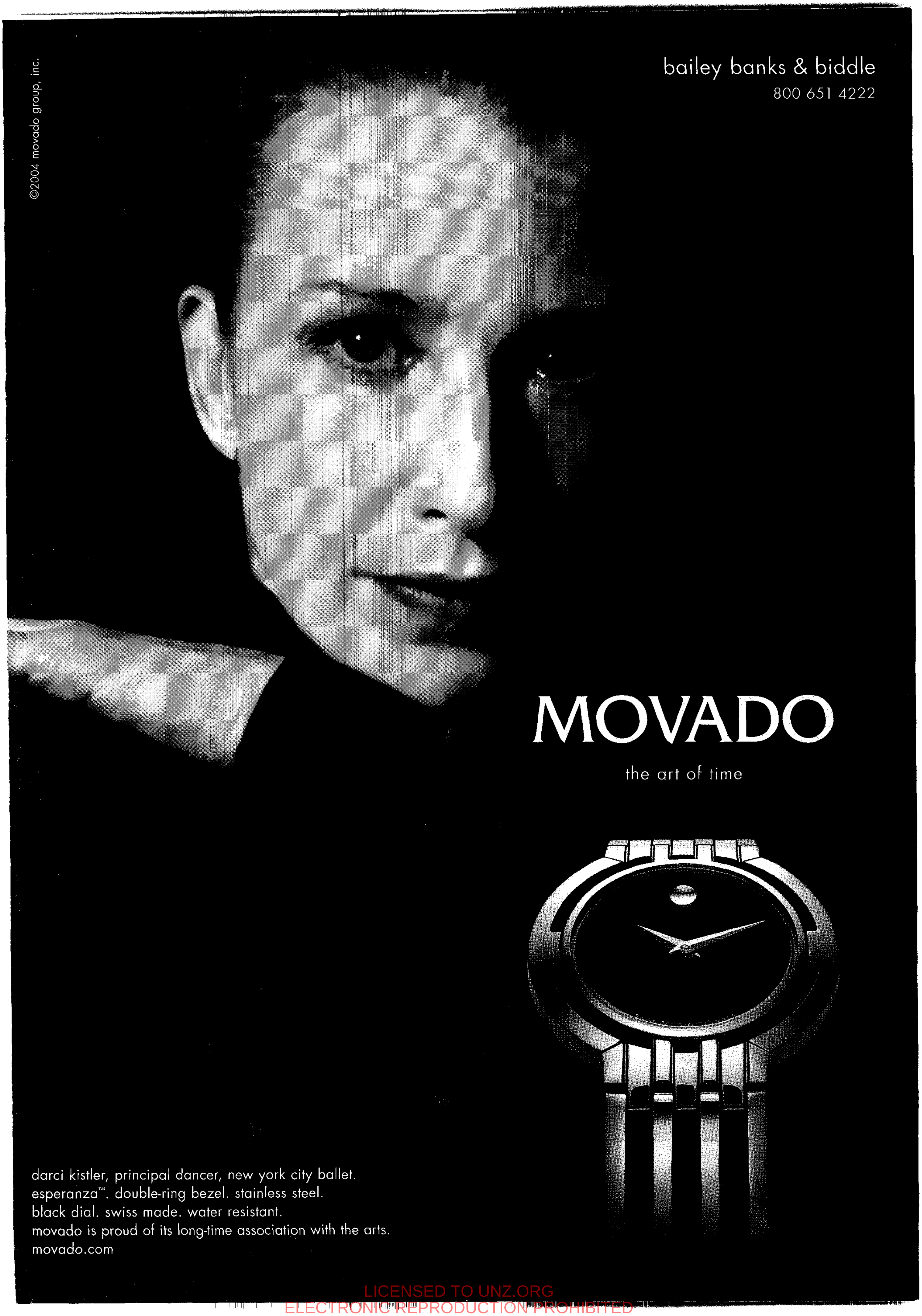


The Hong Kong action epic "Hero," at the New York Asian Film Festival.



LARA TOMLIN

Mark Morris premières two new works: "All Fours" and "Violet Cavern."



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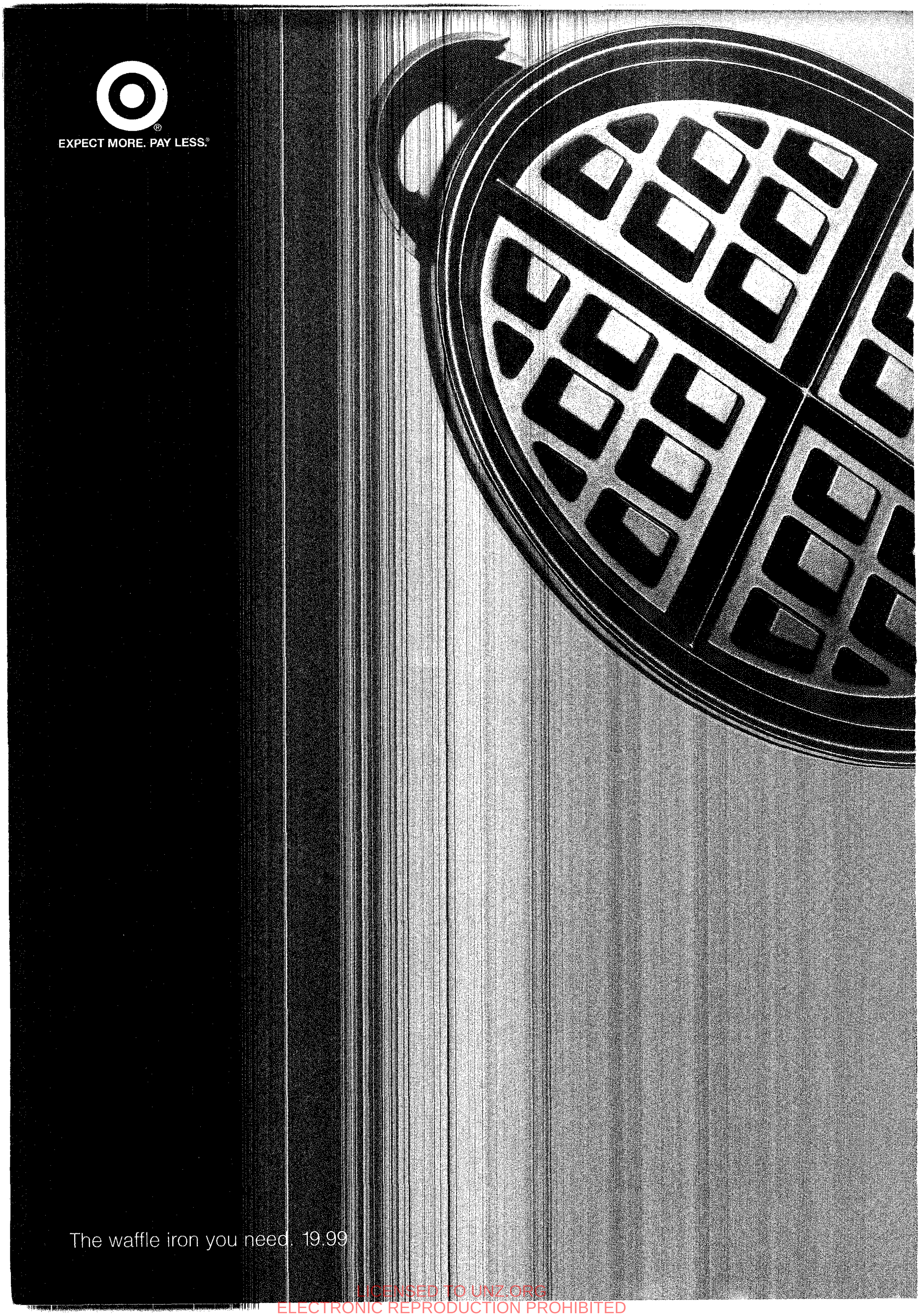
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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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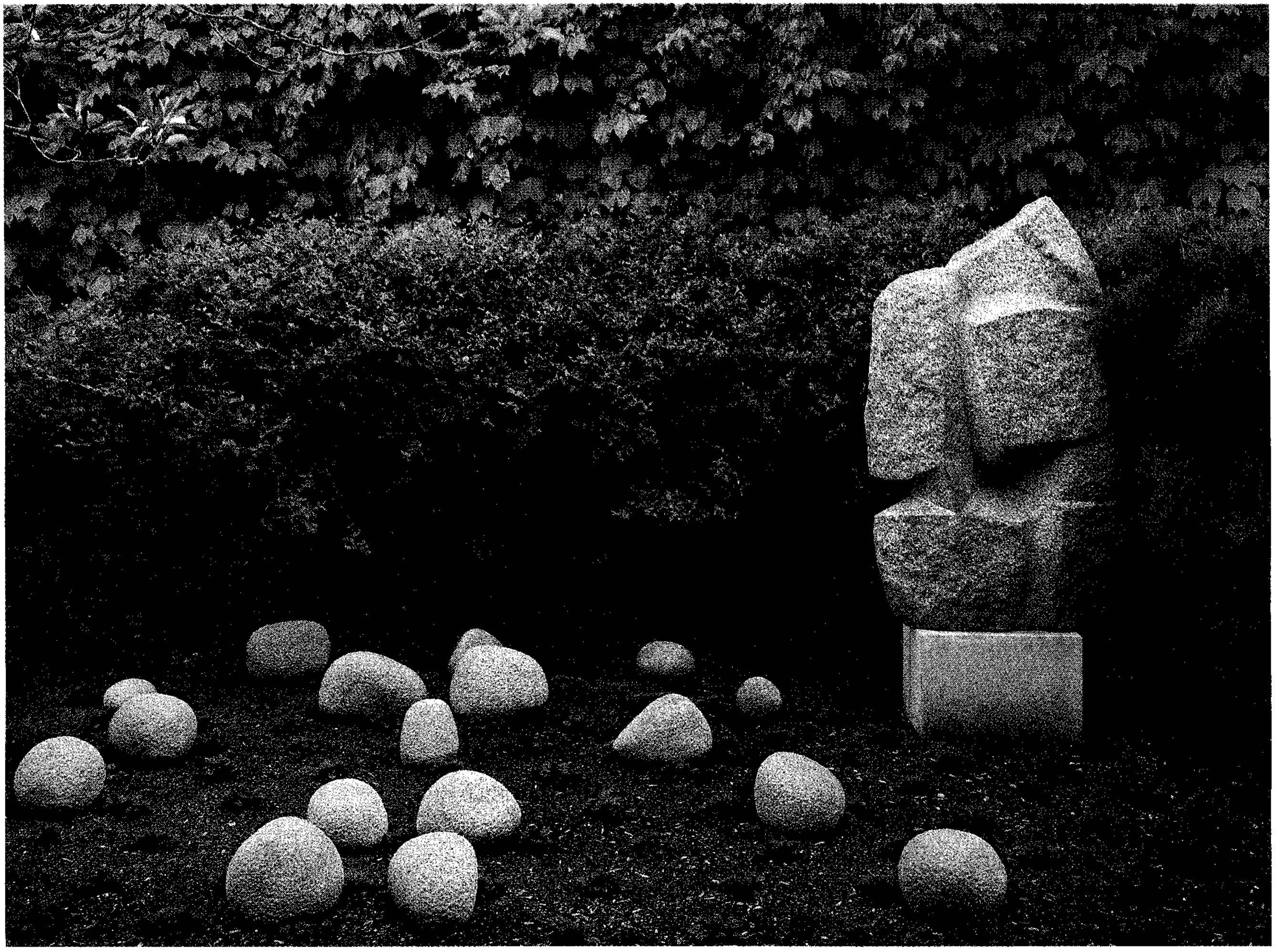

The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, in Long Island City, reopens, after two and a half years of renovations, on June 12.

NIKOLAS KOENIG

ADDRESS UNKNOWN
Jim Dale and William Atherton star in a play based on Kathrine Kressmann Taylor's book about a friendship between a Jewish art dealer in San Francisco and his German business partner, which deteriorates after the latter moves to Nazi Germany. Directed by Frank Dunlop. Two previews on June 9. Opens June 10 at 8. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

AFTERBIRTH: KATHY AND MO'S GREATEST HITS
The actor-writers Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney appear together on the New York stage for the first time in fifteen years, in a production directed by Mark Brokaw. Previews begin June 11. Opens June 17 at 6:30. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

BOISE
The Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre company presents a new play by David Folwell about a middle manager who is derailed by a flirtation. Directed by Rob Bundy. In previews. Opens June 14 at 8. (224 Waverly Pl., west of Seventh Ave. 212-868-4444.)

FABULATION
A dark comedy by Lynn Nottage ("Intimate Apparel") follows the downward slide of a pregnant former publicist into the world of welfare mothers and crack dens. Directed by Kate Whoriskey. In previews. Opens June 13 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE IMAGINARY INVALID
The Comédie-Française brings Molière's satire about a manipulative hypochondriac to Brooklyn. Directed by Claude Stratz, with sets and costumes by Ezio Toffolutti and original music by Marc-Olivier Dupin. June 9-12 at 7:30 and June 13 at 3. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS—THE MUSICAL!
A popular satire of the musical genre, written by Eric Rockwell and Joanne Bogart, returns to the York Theatre at St. Peter's Church for a second run. Directed by Pamela Hunt. Two previews on June 9. Opens June 10 at 8. (Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

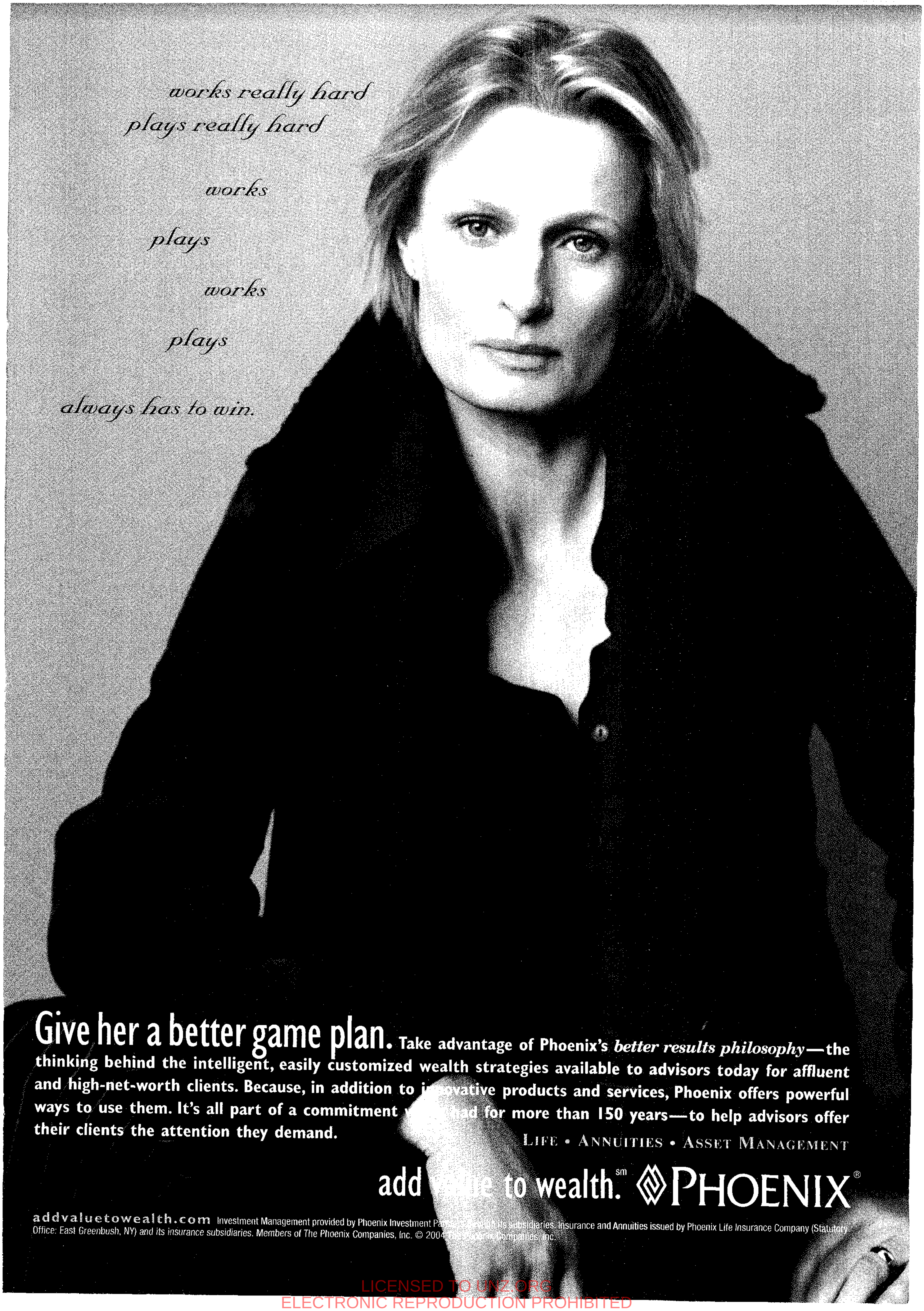
OTHELLO
The Aquila Theatre Company presents a new production, set on a British military base on Cyprus. Part of the audience sits among the actors, in the middle of the stage. Starring Lloyd Notice as Othello and Anthony Cochrane as Iago. Directed and adapted by Robert Richmond. Opens June 9 at 8. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ASSASSINS
The Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical about nine marginalized souls who each took aim at an American President is well sung, gorgeous to look at, and meticulous in its detail. But it has been freighted with more weight than it can properly carry. This dark cartoon—a kind of glib carnival of carnage—was first performed in 1991, at the beginning of the Gulf War, and was meant to have its Broadway début just after September 11, 2001. The delay of more than two years has not helped the show's karma or its message. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/3/04.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOMBAY DREAMS
One of the silliest musicals in recent memory. In this British import, the "scum from the slum" Akaash (the hardworking Manu Narayan) gets discovered by a zaftig Bollywood diva, Rani (the hard-shaking Ayesha Dharker), and becomes a star. Over the course of nine production numbers, Akaash briefly forgets his roots, but not, unfortunately, the lyrics, by Don Black, including those of the show's hit song, "Shakalaka Baby," whose most eloquent passage goes, "Shakalaka baby shakalaka baby / Come and shakalaka with me." (5/10/04) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BOY
A seventeen-year-old boy (T. R. Knight) who survived a suicide pact that claimed the lives of four of his friends and left him partially paralyzed enrolls in a course with a writing teacher, Maureen (Caitlin O'Connell); goes to her husband, Terry (Robert Hogan), for therapy; and makes contact with her son, Mick (Kelly AuCoin). The Boy is compelled by a narrative mission: to unravel and articulate his dark life story. Precision in storytelling, however, is something that the playwright, Julia Jordan, needs to work on. Her scenes are disturbing and sharp, but they remain resolutely ambiguous. It is as if she had erased just enough of the dots in her outline of events for the audience not to be quite able to connect the ones that are left. Directed by Joe Calarco. (5/31/04) (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 212-279-4200. Closes June 27.)



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BUG
As written by Tracy Letts and directed by Dexter Bullard, this play is never exactly what it seems. It begins deceptively simply, in a residential hotel somewhere near Oklahoma City, in a town God may or may not have forsaken. Agnes White (the incomparable Shannon Cochran), who works as a bartender, stands at the door to her small, dingy room. Before long, a friend shows up with a little distraction—a guy named Peter Evans (Michael Shannon), who seems to want to hang out. Scenes of casual surrealism culminate, in the second half of the play, in acts of physical and emotional violence that do more than shock: they arouse both pity and despair. Cochran and Shannon give not only two of the most nuanced performances you'll ever see but two of the greatest. (5/17/04) (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

CHINESE FRIENDS
Jon Robin Baitz's fulminating futuristic play is another thing the Bush Doctrine has to answer for. A policy wonk from a former American regime is visited on his island retreat by his lefty son and two like-minded communards. It's a handcuff-Daddy-to-the-chair-and-slap-him-around-till-he-talks drama. Peter Strauss, who plays the father, is charming as always, the set is fine, and the supporting cast is effectively unpleasant, but the play is well below Baitz's usual high standard. Directed by Robert Egan. With sets by Santo Loquasto and lighting by Donald Holder. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Closes June 13.)

FROZEN
Bryony Lavery's play about a grieving woman whose daughter was killed by a pedophile has moved to Broadway. Starring Swoosie Kurtz and Brían F. O'Byrne and directed by Doug Hughes. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

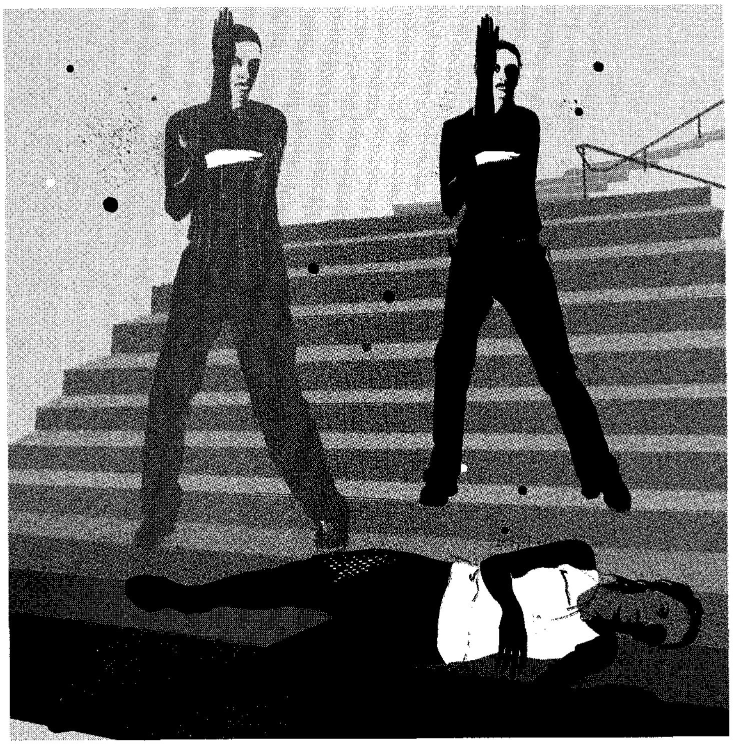
HERE LIES JENNY
Bebe Neuwirth stars in a musical performance that weaves together the music of Kurt Weill and lyrics by Bertolt Brecht, Ira Gershwin, Langston Hughes, and Alan Jay Lerner (among others). Choreographed by Ann Reinking and directed by Roger Rees, with musical direction by Leslie Stifelman. (Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

INTIMATE APPAREL
Lynn Nottage's subtle and compelling play, a Roundabout Theatre Company production, reveals the fine emotional filigree of an ordinary black woman's life and the social forces that shape it. Starring Viola Davis and Russell Hornsby. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (4/19 & 26/04) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. Closes June 13.)

IN TOKEN OF MY ADMIRATION
Words, video sequences, and oddly melancholy vaudeville routines overlap and repeat in a play conceived and written by the Axis Theatre Company, about the intense, brief friendship between Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The script works rather like a sestina: the men say such things as "I haven't written anything" and "I'm ready to be annihilated" in rounds as images from their personal lives flash on screens behind them. Each man wants the other to absorb the burden of his genius—a load that proved too heavy for their friendship to bear. Randy Sharp directs. (1 Sheridan Sq. 212-807-9300. Closes June 12.)

SEVEN
Ellen Stewart's Great Jones Repertory Company presents a cycle of seven Greek plays, including a vigorous new hour-long staging of "Antigone." Performed in a language that approximates ancient Greek but is easy to follow, the tale of revenge gone wrong is told mostly through song, set to music by Elizabeth Swados. Stewart emphasizes the physicality of theatre created before the age of special effects: for example, when Antigone's son, Maeon, participates in the Olympic games at Thebes, actors wearing gold thongs compete in high-jump trials onstage, clearing a pole more than five feet high. Six other tragedies run in repertory: "Medea," "Electra," "The Trojan Women," "Mythos Oedipus," "Seven Against Thebes," and "Dionysus: Filius Dei." (74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through June 13.)

SIGHT UNSEEN
In a revival of Donald Margulies's subtle 1992 play at the Manhattan Theatre Club's Biltmore Theatre, under the impeccable direction of Dan Sullivan, Jonathan Waxman (Ben Shenkman), a wunderkind of American modern art who is in England for a retrospective of his work, walks into a threadbare farmer's cottage in Norfolk to visit Patricia (Laura Linney), his former muse, and, in her words, "the sacrificial shiksa," whom he jilted fifteen years earlier; she now lives with her shy, ornery husband, Nick (the expert Byron Jennings). Shenkman and Linney play masterfully together; they make quicksilver shifts of mood sparkle with nervy implication. Nick, whose sulfurous jealousy Jennings makes spectacular, finally admits to Jonathan the sexual wasteland of his marriage to Patricia. The play ends poignantly with a flashback to Jonathan and Patricia's guileless first meeting. The power of their connection, so often invoked during the play, is finally shown, rather than described. The audience watches the scene with the bittersweet knowledge of the woe to come. (6/7/04) (261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)


"The Grand Step Project" puts its dancers on the city's staircases.

ULLA PUGGARD

TOXIC AUDIO: LOUDMOUTH
Five singers use their voices to create percussion accompaniment to a grab bag of pop and jazz songs and to bust out in what sound like guitar and horn solos. The show hails from Orlando, and, while its high-energy technical feats and audience-participation gags recall "Stomp" and "Blue Man Group," it lacks urban sharpness. Still, the group's vocal command is impressive. At the end, when they sing unmiked, it's like a magician showing he has nothing up his sleeve. Conceived and directed by René Ruiz, who also performs. (John Houseman Theatre, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Three story ballets fill the next two weeks at A.B.T.: "Don Quixote," with its sumptuous Iberian costumes and slow-whirling windmill; the company's dreamy production of "Swan Lake"; and the whimsical "Coppélia." For a full cast list, see www.abt.org. ♦ June 7-8 and June 10-11 at 8 and June 9 and June 12 at 2 and 8: "Don Quixote." ♦ June 14-18 at 8 and June 19 at 2 and 8: "Swan Lake." ♦ June 21-22 at 8: "Coppélia." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 3.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
City Ballet's centennial celebration of George Balanchine closes with a Russian festival, featuring multiple nights of music by Igor Stravinsky, one Greek-themed evening, and one modernist evening. The season within a season begins June 8 with an all-Balanchine program conducted by the Kirov Opera's Valery Gergiev. Also, the St. Petersburg dance-maker Boris Eifman presents his first ballet created for an American company, "Musagèt," named after Apollo, dedicated to Balanchine, and set to music by Bach and Tchaikovsky. ♦ June 8 at 7:30 (an all-Balanchine program): "Mozartiana," "Firebird," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 9 at 8: "Mozartiana," "The Cage," "Andantino," and "Firebird." ♦ June 10 at 8: (an all-Balanchine/Stravinsky Greek trilogy): "Apollo," "Orpheus," and "Agon." ♦ June 11 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "The Cage," "Duo Concertant," and "Firebird." ♦ June 12 at 2 (an all-Balanchine program): "Raymonda Variations," "Orpheus," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 12 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Mozartiana," "Orpheus," and "Agon." ♦ June 13 at 3: "Agon," "The Cage," "Andantino," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 15 at 7:30: "Raymonda Variations," "Andantino," "Concerto for Two Solo Pianos," and "Firebird." ♦ June 16 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Raymonda Variations," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 17 at 8 (an all-Balanchine/Stravinsky Black and White Evening): "Agon," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Duo Concertant," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 18 at 8: "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3" and "Musagèt." ♦ June 19 at 2 (an all-Balanchine/Tchaikovsky program): "Allegro Brillante," "Mozartiana," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 19 at 8: "Scherzo à la Russe," "Concerto for Two Solo Pianos," "Allegro Brillante," and "Musagèt." ♦ June 20 at 3 (an all-Balanchine program): "Allegro Brillante," "Scherzo à la Russe," "Duo Concertant," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ June 22 at 7:30: "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Concerto for Two Solo Pianos," and "Musagèt." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 27.)

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
Morris has a season at BAM (see This Week). (BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. June 8 and June 10-12 at 7:30.)

"GHOSTLIGHT"
In his night-club act "Martha @ Mother," the dancer Richard Move was pitch perfect in his impersonation of the imperious, capricious Martha Graham. A new film, "Ghostlight," opening at the Pioneer Theatre on June 23, captures his performance. Co-starring

TABLES FOR TWO

360

360 Van Brunt St. (718-246-0360)—"Fish salty enough for you?" Jorge Riera, the manager of this Red Hook French restaurant, groused when he caught a customer overseasoning his dish. Riera and the owner, Arnaud Erhart, both burly and bearded, run the floor with intimidation tactics that seem borrowed from the auto mechanics on "Monster Garage." There is no room for negotiation.

Erhart is also an aggressive morning marketer, and brings in a fresh haul every day for his chef, Pascal LeSeac'h. The menu changes nightly, but the price is always twenty-five dollars for an appetizer, entrée, and dessert, and there are always three choices of each. LeSeac'h has a nice touch at the stove: a recent roast-pork entrée came with a thick layer of caramelized onions; balsamic vinegar infused every bite. A lamb chop, ordered rare, was seared perfectly. You can also order à la carte or pick from a list of Les Petites Faims: oysters, steak tartare, a charcuterie plate. The codfish brandade—fish mashed with garlic and cream—was passed around the table and swiftly disappeared. For dessert, there are simple tarts and *financiers*.

The restaurant occupies a well-designed storefront on a ramshackle block, and lazy sunset basketball games on a court across the street provide background noise. There are "No Ikea" stickers in the window—it's clear which side Erhart comes down on in the debate over Red Hook's future. Unapologetically unappetizing anti-Bush linocuts by a genuine waterfront artist hang inside. The list of mostly organic wines is esoteric and hard to read (the type looks as if it was bashed out on an Underwood), and it leaves even experienced drinkers entirely at the mercy of the owner's terse suggestions. But the suggestions are worth taking. Erhart, who was trained as a sommelier, finds thirty-some-odd-dollar bargains and decants them into lab beakers.

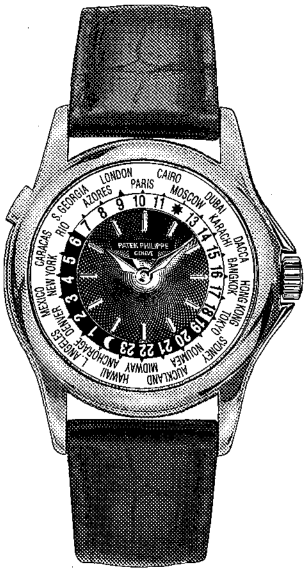
A loyal cult following of crisply dressed food fans—they look to be from brownstone Brooklyn—seems to enjoy the cocky disdain here. When, one night recently, a diner broke his water glass, Riera at first denied him a replacement, and seemed serious when he said, "I don't know about you . . . " Then he turned to do battle with a young woman who was eager for a table and growing impatient with the wait. (Open for dinner Wednesdays through Sundays. Entrées $12-$19.)

—*Owen Phillips*

Ann Magnuson, Isaac Mizrahi, Mark Morris, and Deborah Harry. By way of a preview, Move recreates the role (with an ensemble and many special guests) at the Jane Street Theatre on June 17. (113 Jane St. 212-239-6200. June 17 at 7:30 and 10.)

"THE GRAND STEP PROJECT"
In the latest collaboration between the site artist and choreographer Stephan Koplowitz and the composer Quentin Chiappetta, fifty dancers dressed as office workers roll down the steps at the New York Public Library in the lunch-hour sunshine. Designed for six grand staircases in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, Koplowitz's dance is based on the ways that people use stairs; each performance is preceded by a choral concert. (212-625-3505. Winter Garden, World Financial Center, June 15 at 8; New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St., June 17-19 at noon, 12:45, and 1:30. Through June 28.)

JENNIFER MULLER/THE WORKS
Muller comes to the Joyce with two premières in a sensual mood. In "Flowers," the dancers perform behind a scrim onto which Barbara Bordnick's photographs of blossoms and buds are projected in closeup. "Ecstatic Poems" is accompanied by readings of verse by the Sufi poets Hafez and Rumi. With Muller's recent works "Bounce,"



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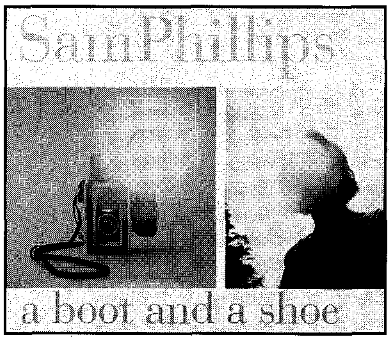
Words on Music

Borders' music expert Andy Sibray says:
"Still one of the most clever and subtle singer-songwriters around, Sam Phillips' set of alluring, poetic compositions draw you into her world from the first note and the simple accompaniments sustain a compelling intimacy."



N
NONESUCH

"An economy of style that puts the focus on her warm, unaffected vocals... a perfect backdrop for her intelligent lyrics and straightforward singing. In a just world, radio would play music this smart and Phillips would be a star."
Associated Press

"Balancing intrigue and seduction against the anguish of romantic despair, Phillips flirts with Depression-era stylings and pre-WWII cabaret to brilliantly convey a chaotic world of subdued rage."
Entertainment Weekly

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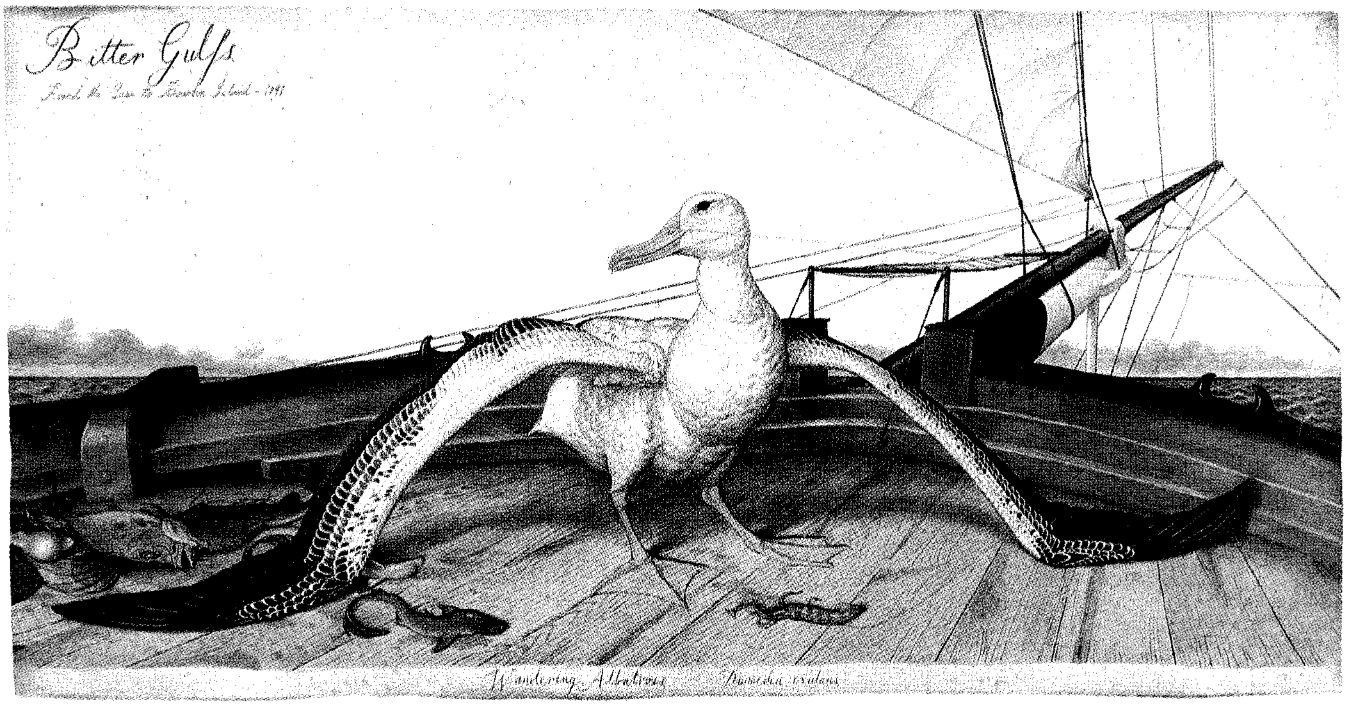

Walton Ford's huge watercolor of an albatross comprises the first show at Kasmin Gallery's new space in Chelsea (see Art).

COURTESY OF PAUL KASMIN AND THE ARTIST

"Moon," and "NY Stories." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 15 at 7, June 16-18 at 8, and June 19 at 2 and 8.)

JACOB'S PILLOW
The Seán Curran Company brings its souped-up jig "Folk Dance for the Future" to the Berkshires, members of the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company perform the duet from "Smile with My Heart," and dancers from the School at Jacob's Pillow première a ballet by Leslie Browne. Highlights of the season, which runs through August 29, include Israel's Batsheva Dance Company, Peter Boal and Company, the Boston Ballet, and the companies of Paul Taylor and Mark Morris. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. June 19 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

WARREN HAYNES
A solo show by the former Allman Brothers guitarist. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. June 9 at 8.)

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING"
Al-fresco dancing starts on June 10 with a Count Basie and Glenn Miller program, courtesy of George Gee's Swingin' Big Band. June 11: A night of *son* and rumba with Los Soneros de Oriente. June 12: The classic salsa of Willie Villegas y Entre Amigos. June 15: Dominic Kanza and the African Rhythm Machine. June 16: Jump blues and boogie-woogie with Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. June 17: Mambo and cha-cha with the Harbor Latin Big Band. June 18: The sounds of New Orleans with Deacon John's Jump Blues. June 19: Avantango. June 22: Ed Polcer and the Magic of Swing Street. (Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center. All shows at 7:30, with dance lessons at 6:30. For more information, call 212-875-5766. Through July 16.)

DIDO
Like Madonna, she's a British singer with only one name. What? Madonna's not British? At any rate, Dido doesn't dance very much or shock very much; her adult-oriented pop, flavored by electronica, is saved by a richly plangent voice. With the up-and-coming singer-songwriter **Jonathan Rice.** (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. June 13-14 at 7:30.)

"CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!"
The Kings County outdoor music series starts on June 16 at 8 when the kings of East L.A., **Los Lobos,** cruise into town for a benefit concert. Their latest album, "Ride," finds the band in the company of friends, including Bobby Womack, Mavis Staples, Café Tacuba, Elvis Costello, and Richard Thompson. June 18 at 7:30: The **Subdudes** and **Terrence Simien and the Zydeco Experience** bring the hot rhythms of New Orleans to New York. June 19 at 7:30: The great **Ladysmith Black Mambazo,** who brought the South African a-cappella style *isicathamiya* to the world, shares a bill with the venerated South African guitarist, singer, composer, and political activist **Vusi Mahlasela.** (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

MADONNA
The pop icon tries to remain iconic, or at least relevant, following her first unsuccessful album, "American Life." On her "Re-Invention Tour," the Kabbalah-besotted children's-book author digs deep into her back catalogue while surrounded by scantily clad dancers. Costume changes occur roughly once every fifteen minutes. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. June 16-17, June 20-21, and June 23-24 at 8.)

PHISH
The jam band that inherited the Grateful Dead's mantle has announced that they'll soon split up to pursue other interests. How soon depends on how long their next open-ended instrumental lasts. (Keyspan Park, 1904 Surf Ave., Coney Island, Brooklyn. 212-307-7171. June 17-18 at 7.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
June 18 at 7: **Newport Jazz Festival Fiftieth Anniversary.** The producer George Wein is something of a miracle worker; he's kept a jazz festival going for half a century despite waning interest in the genre. While his mighty JVC Jazz Festival rolls on, Wein takes a moment to toot his own horn—it's a piano, actually—during a special free celebration with the Newport All-Stars, which includes such topnotch players as the saxophonist Frank Wess, the trumpeter Randy Brecker, and the guitarist Howard Alden. Bert Stern's "Jazz on a Summer's Day," which documents the 1958 Newport Festival and remains the most stirring jazz-concert film of all time, will be screened. June 19 at 3: An afternoon of sweet neo-soul with **Floetry.** (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

"LIVE FROM HOME"
The winning acoustic-music series at the Housing Works Used Book Café continues with the **Cowboy Junkies, Fastball,** and **LP.** (126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. June 18 at 7:30.)

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
The JVC Jazz Festival retains its hold on Manhattan, featuring music in many concert halls and clubs. Highlights include João Gilberto (on June 18); K. D. Lang with the Brooklyn Philharmonic (on June 19); a double bill of Abbey Lincoln and the Ornette Coleman quartet (on June 20); Tracy Chapman, Lizz Wright, Odetta, and others celebrating the legacy of Nina Simone (on June 21); and an all-star quartet with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Dave Holland, and Brian Blade (on June 25), all at Carnegie Hall at 8. (See also the Iridium, the Jazz Standard, and the Village Vanguard. Through June 26. For more information, call 212-501-1390 or visit www.festivalproductions.net.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 9: The rapper **Masta Killah** and friends from the Wu-Tang Clan. June 16: In the wrong hands, the electric blues consists of flat, lachrymose lyrics and endless scrunched-face solos. The **Robert Cray Band** has been injecting fresh ideas and passion into the genre for two decades, with Cray's impressive singing, strong songwriting, and love of earthy Southern soul. June 19-20: **B. B. King** comes to town to celebrate the fourth anniversary of his Times Square home. His guests are the local singer-songwriter **Citizen Cope** on the first night and the New Orleans pianist **Henry Butler** and the blues heir **John Lee Hooker, Jr.** on the second.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 9: The beloved proto-punk icon **Jonathan Richman.** June 14-15: The surviving members of the late-sixties Detroit combo the MC5—the guitarist Wayne Kramer, the drummer Dennis Thompson, and the bassist Michael David—have reunited as **DKT/MC5.** They're touring with the help of the vocalists Mark Arm and Evan Dando (of Mudhoney and the Lemonheads, respectively) and the guitarist Marshall Crenshaw.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 17: **Los Lobos** (see "Celebrate Brooklyn!"). June 18-19: The thorny English troubadour and guitar legend **Richard Thompson.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 10: The sixty-nine-year-old guitarist **Jody Williams** is a

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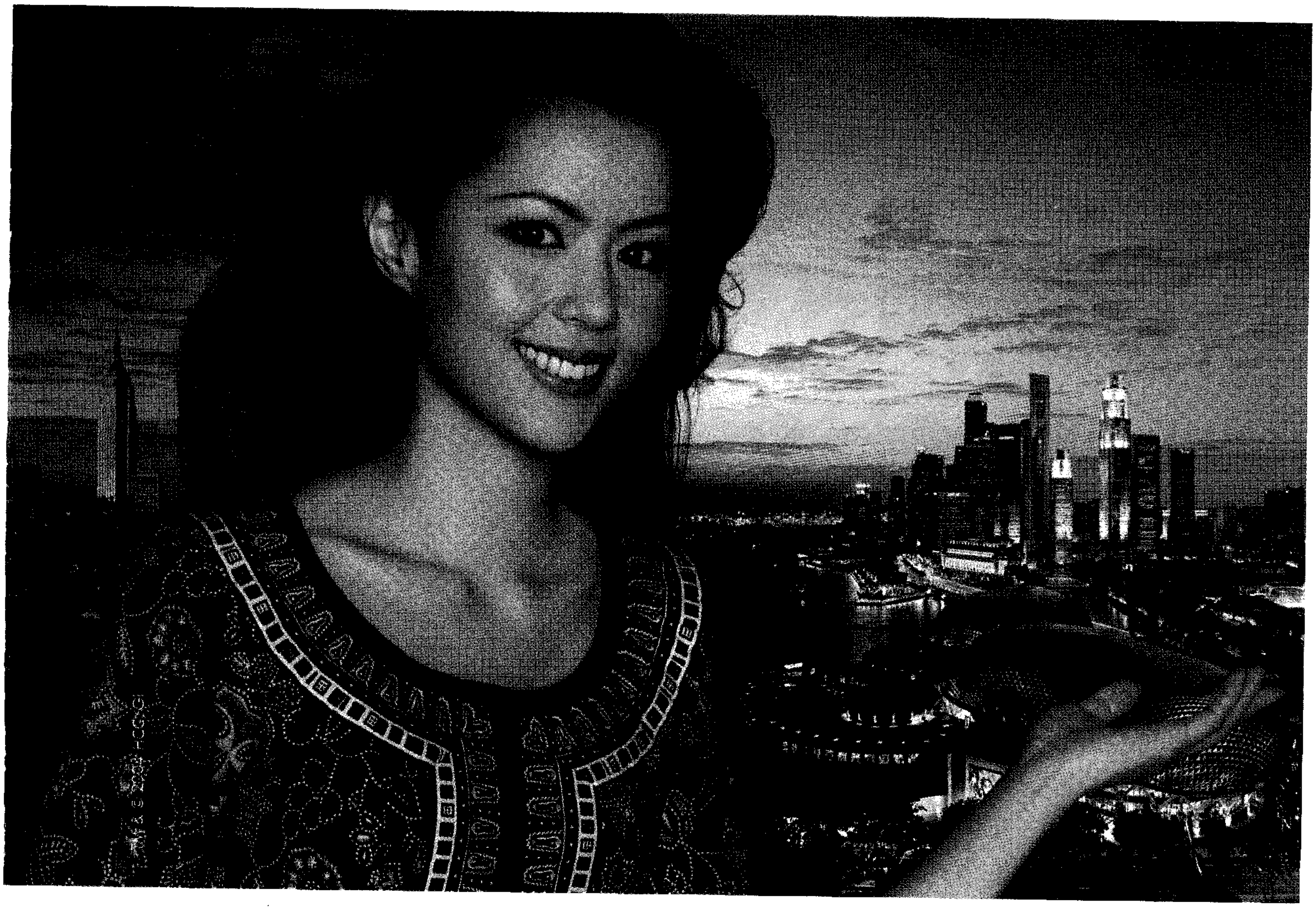

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—*Entertainment Weekly*

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—*San Francisco Chronicle*

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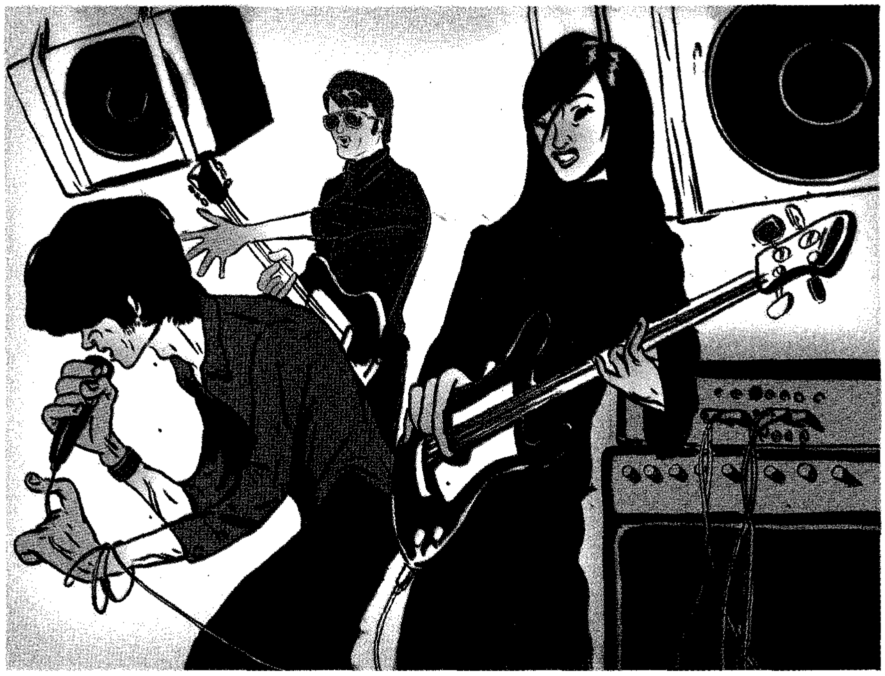
Chicago legend who once backed Bo Diddley and Howlin' Wolf. Last year, after some three decades in retirement, he released an album, "You Left Me in the Dark," that reinvigorated the Chicago blues scene. This is his first appearance in New York City. June 12: **Greg Garing,** a longtime member of the local old-time country scene. June 17-18: The warm, dusky voice of **Sam Phillips.** June 19: **Henry Butler** (see the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill).

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—June 12: The downtown acoustic-music hub celebrates the release of its second CD of live music, with appearances by such regulars as **Richard Julian, Julia Darling, Dayna Kurtz,** and **Jesse Harris.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—June 12: **Weird War,** a group from Washington, D.C., that used to be called the Scene Creamers (a legal fight with a French graffiti collaborative led to the new name), continues to make bass-heavy excursions into the dark corners of the rock world. Also on the bill are the **Apes,** a four-piece D.C. band that proves you don't need guitars to make a ruckus. They use organs and copious amounts of energy instead.



The Washington, D.C.-based band Weird War, at the Mercury Lounge.

ZOHAR LAZAR

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—June 21-22: **Dale Watson,** a pompadoured, tattooed singer-guitarist out of Austin, plays honky-tonk as if he were on a mission from God—or at least from Merle Haggard.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—June 9: The **Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra,** famous for bizarre cover versions and frenetic performances, has kept Japan moving to the sounds of the Caribbean for nearly two decades. This marks their first New York appearance. June 14: **Bio Ritmo,** a salsa band from Richmond, Virginia.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—June 12: The downtown trio **Spanish Fly** returns with a repertoire that's as wild as its lineup (Marcus Rojas on tuba, Steven Bernstein on slide trumpet, and David Tronzo on slide guitar).

VOLUME
99 N. 13th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-388-3588)—June 10: The **Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra** (see S.O.B.'s). June 16: The Weimaresque cabaret of Boston's **Dresden Dolls.** June 18: The Scottish art rockers **Franz Ferdinand.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 14-19: With his whirlwind technique and pile-driving swing, **Oscar Peterson** represents, for most of America, mainstream jazz piano.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through June 26, **Bobby Short,** who will be back in the fall for his final appearances here.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 15-20: The JVC Jazz Festival presents a tribute to the **"Statesmen of Jazz,"** featuring Buddy DeFranco, Louie Bellson, Warren Vache, and, on June 15, Clark Terry and Wycliffe Gordon. Guests, including Ken Peplowski and Houston Person, join the assembly throughout the engagement. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through June 20: **Tierney Sutton.** Any contemporary singer who evokes Frank Sinatra is courting danger, but on Sutton's recent album, "Dancing in the Dark," she finds her own way into the Chairman of the Board's material.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The JVC Jazz Festival caters to a younger crowd with **Robert Walter's 20th Congress** on June 17, the **Soul of John Black** on June 18, and the **Bennevento/Russo** duo on June 19.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—June 11-12: A formidable improviser with a full-blooded tone that sets her apart from lightweight or Coltrane-obsessed soprano-sax players, **Jane Ira Bloom** has been even more adventurous recently, testing herself against edgier players and succeeding admirably. June 18-19: The trumpeter **Randy Sandke** knows that traditionalists can lean to the left and that new-jazz players have their conservative sides. By bringing improvisers like **Marty Ehrlich, Scott Robinson,** and **Uri Caine** together in his Inside/Outside band, Sandke messes with accepted notions.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—**Marcus Roberts** (here with his trio through June 13) has the history of jazz piano at his fingertips, reach-

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LINCOLN CENTER
presents
July 6 – July 25

LINCOLN CENTER
Festival 2004

Monotones I, The Joffrey Ballet

Five Brahms Waltzes, Birmingham Royal Ballet

Rhapsody, K-Ballet Company

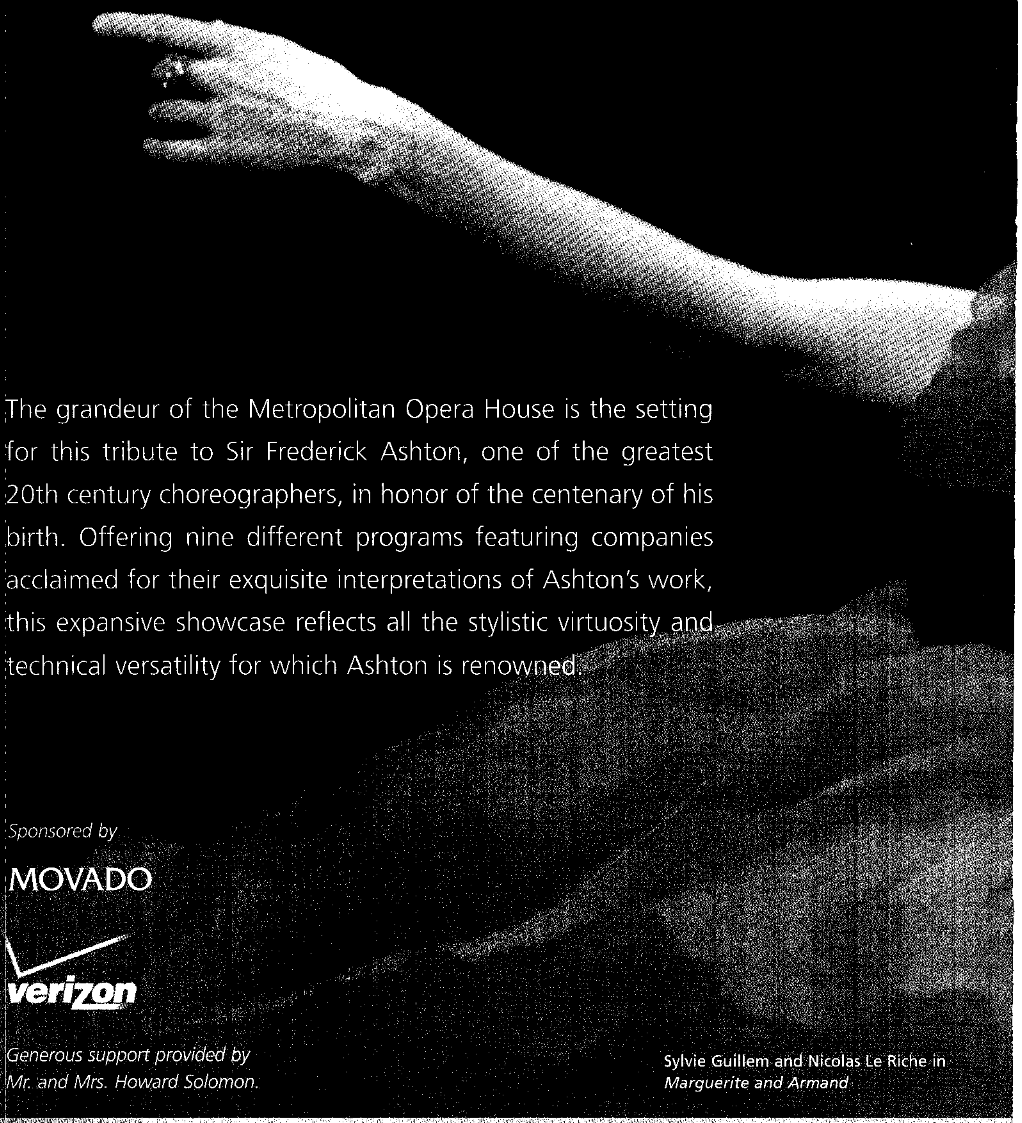
Cinderella, The Royal Ballet

ASHTON CELEBRATION

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
THE JOFFREY BALLET
K-BALLET COMPANY
THE ROYAL BALLET

All Choreography by **Sir Frederick Ashton**
New York City Opera Orchestra
Music Director **George Manahan**

METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE
July 6 – July 17



The grandeur of the Metropolitan Opera House is the setting for this tribute to Sir Frederick Ashton, one of the greatest 20th century choreographers, in honor of the centenary of his birth. Offering nine different programs featuring companies acclaimed for their exquisite interpretations of Ashton's work, this expansive showcase reflects all the stylistic virtuosity and technical versatility for which Ashton is renowned.

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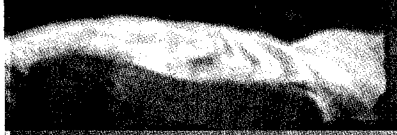
Sylvie Guillem and Nicolas Le Riche in
Marguerite and Armand



For Tickets: Lincoln Center Festival Box Office (Avery Fisher Hall, 65th St. & Broadway)

Program I
Tuesday, July 6 at 8:00

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
THE JOFFREY BALLET
K-BALLET COMPANY

The Joffrey Ballet–*Monotones I and II* (1966, 1965; Music: Satie)
Birmingham Royal Ballet–*Enigma Variations* (1968; Music: Elgar)
K-Ballet Company–*Rhapsody* (1980; Music: Rachmaninoff)

Program II
Wednesday, July 7 at 8:00

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
THE JOFFREY BALLET
K-BALLET COMPANY

K-Ballet Company–*Rhapsody*
Birmingham Royal Ballet–*Dante Sonata* (1940; Music: Liszt)
Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan (1977; Music: Brahms)
The Joffrey Ballet–*A Wedding Bouquet* (1937; Music: Lord Berners; Text: Gertrude Stein)

Program III
Thursday, July 8 at 8:00

THE JOFFREY BALLET

Les Patineurs (1937; Music: Meyerbeer)
Monotones I and II
A Wedding Bouquet

Program IV
Friday, July 9 at 8:00

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Enigma Variations
The Two Pigeons (1961; Music: Messager)

Program V
Saturday, July 10 at 8:00

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Dante Sonata
The Two Pigeons

Program VI
Tuesday, July 13 at 8:00

THE ROYAL BALLET

Scènes de Ballet (1948; Music: Stravinsky): Yoshida, Putrov
Divertissements–Pas de deux
    Awakening: Bussell, Urlezaga
    Voices of Spring: Cojocaru, Kobborg
    Thais: Benjamin, Soares
    Ondine: Rojo, Cope
Marguerite and Armand (1963; Music: Liszt, orchestrated by Humphrey Seale): Guillem, Le Riche

Program VII
Wednesday, July 14 at 8:00

THE ROYAL BALLET

Scènes de Ballet: Cojocaru, Kobborg
Divertissements–Pas de deux
    Awakening: Tapper, Bonelli
    Voices of Spring: Benjamin, Urlezaga
    Thais: Galeazzi, Makhateli
    Birthday Offering: Bussell, Cope
Marguerite and Armand: Guillem, Le Riche

Program VIII
Thursday, July 15 at 8:00

THE ROYAL BALLET

Scènes de Ballet: Yoshida, Putrov
Divertissements–Pas de deux
    Awakening: Nunez, Soares
    Voices of Spring: Galeazzi, Samoduro
    Birthday Offering: Bussell, Urlezaga
    Ondine: Rojo, Cope
Marguerite and Armand: Guillem, Le Riche

Program IX
Friday, July 16 at 8:00

THE ROYAL BALLET

Cinderella (1948; Music: Prokofiev; New Production: Wendy Ellis Somes): Cojocaru, Kobborg, Dowell, Sleep, McMeekan, Martin

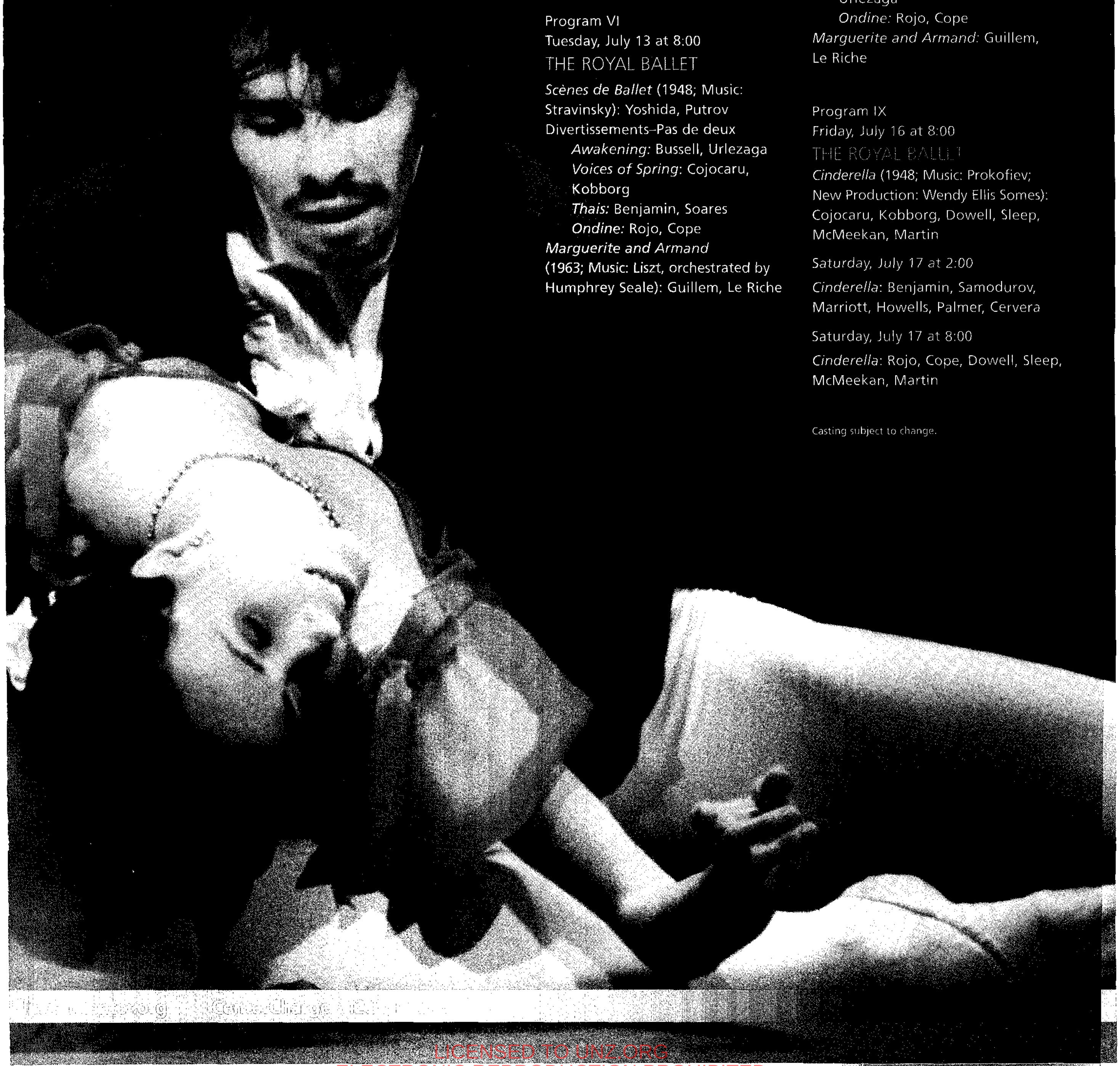
Saturday, July 17 at 2:00

Cinderella: Benjamin, Samodurov, Marriott, Howells, Palmer, Cervera

Saturday, July 17 at 8:00

Cinderella: Rojo, Cope, Dowell, Sleep, McMeekan, Martin

Casting subject to change.



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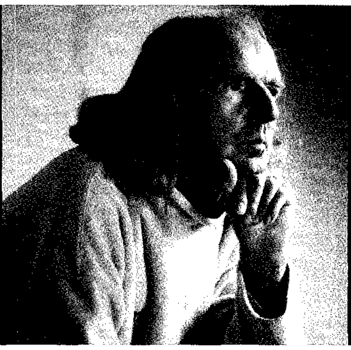
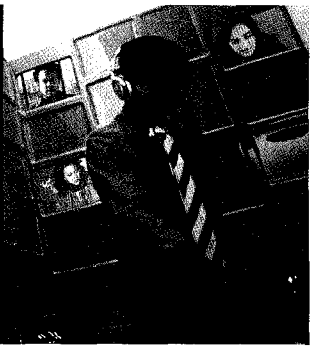
Ashton Celebration, The Royal Ballet



The Veil of the Temple, Sir John Tavener

The Slave, Gesher Theatre



Transmetropolitan, DJ Spooky

DANCE

Ashton Celebration

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
THE JOFFREY BALLET
K-BALLET COMPANY
THE ROYAL BALLET

See previous page for complete program information.

Shen Wei Dance Arts

A new work visualizing a haunting otherworld that falls somewhere between modern dance, performance art, painting, and sculpture.

July 14, 16 & 17 at 8:00

ALICE TULLY HALL

MUSIC

Elvis Costello

Metropole Orkest
July 13 at 8:00

The Imposters
July 15 at 8:00

Il Sogno
Brooklyn Philharmonic
July 17 at 8:00

AVERY FISHER HALL

The Veil of the Temple

A riveting seven-hour spiritual journey conceived by British composer Sir John Tavener.

July 24 at 10:30 pm

AVERY FISHER HALL

Photos: © 1993 Lois Greenfield; Elvis Costello: Mark Seliger; Theatre-Atelier: Victor Sentsov; Shen Wei Dance Arts: David Massio; The Elephant Vanishes (original cast): Robbie Jack; Marguerite and Armand: Bill Cooper; The Joffrey Ballet: Herbert Migdoll; Birmingham Royal Ballet: Bill Cooper; K-Ballet Company: Jin Kimoto; Cinderella: Dee Conway; Sir John Tavener: Richard Haughton © Chester Music; The Slave: Gadi Dagon; DJ Spooky: Iñaki Vinaixa; Colson Whitehead: Natasha Stovall; Beth Coleman: Pablo Fiasco.

THEATER

The Frogs, A New Musical

A collaboration by Stephen Sondheim, Susan Stroman, and, in his debut as a librettist, Nathan Lane.

Previews July 6–21
July 6–10 at 8:00
July 7 and 10 at 2:00
July 12–17 at 8:00
July 14 and 17 at 2:00
July 19–20 at 8:00
July 21 at 2:00 & 8:00
July 23 at 8:00
July 24 at 2:00 & 8:00

VIVIAN BEAUMONT THEATER

Theatre-Atelier Piotr Fomenko

Two compelling works evoking the rich tradition of Russian theater.

War and Peace
July 6–7 at 7:00

Egyptian Nights
July 9–10 at 8:00

ALICE TULLY HALL

Rezo Gabriadze's

The Doctor and The Patient

An ensemble work incorporating text and movement with music. Featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov, Jon DeVries, Luis Perez, Pilar Witherspoon, and Yvonne Woods.

Friday, July 9 at 8:30
Saturday, July 10 at 2:00 & 8:30
Sunday, July 11 at 3:00
Tuesday–Saturday,
July 13–17 at 8:30
Saturday, July 17 at 2:00

JOHN JAY COLLEGE THEATER

THEATER (continued)

Heisei Nakamura-za

Japanese Kabuki in all its resplendent authenticity.

July 17–18 at 2:00 & 7:00
July 19 at 7:00
July 20–21 at 2:00 & 7:00
July 22–23 at 7:00
July 24 at 2:00 & 8:00
July 25 at 2:00 & 7:00

DAMROSCH PARK

Yevgeny Arye's

Gesher Theatre

The Israeli-based company celebrates the centennial of Isaac Bashevis Singer's birth.

The Slave
July 20–21 at 8:00 (Hebrew)
July 22–23 at 8:00 (Russian)

Shosha
July 24–25 at 8:00 (Hebrew)

JOHN JAY COLLEGE THEATER

Simon McBurney's

The Elephant Vanishes

A multimedia theater piece inspired by Haruki Murakami's short stories. Co-produced with Complicite and the Setagaya Public Theatre.

July 21–24 at 8:00
July 25 at 3:00

NEW YORK STATE THEATER

MULTIMEDIA

Transmetropolitan

The spirit of global video and music explodes in this series of short sets curated by DJ Spooky.

July 21 at 8:00

ALICE TULLY HALL

Tone Test

Nicholas Brooke's chamber opera.

July 22–24 at 8:30

CLARK STUDIO THEATER

DJ Spooky's: Rebirth of a Nation

D.W. Griffith's controversial 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, is turned on its head in this multimedia spectacle.

July 23–24 at 8:30

ALICE TULLY HALL

Quatre Chiens

The scores of four composers performed live by Ensemble Sospeso during four consecutive screenings of *Un Chien Andalou*.

July 22 at 8:00

WALTER READE THEATER

New York Video Festival

Presented by The Film Society of Lincoln Center showcasing the latest digital innovations.

July 14–July 18

WALTER READE THEATER

For complete program information call the **Info Request Line** at **212.875.5766**, or visit **lincolncenter.org**.

Tickets to the Ashton Celebration are also available at the **Met Box Office** or through **Met Ticket Service 212.362.6000.**

For Tickets: Lincoln Center Festival Box Office (65th St. & Broadway) lincolncenter.org CenterCharge 212.721.6500

ing back to ragtime, stride, and modal hard bop. Tweaking tradition, though, is his real talent. June 15-20: The **Greg Osby** quartet. Osby is the modern bandleader to put your money on. He's an altoist with his own sound—bright and metallic-toned, with a rhythmic energy that follows its own skewed metronome—and he's fast becoming the Art Blakey of his day, collecting a coterie of sharp young players around him. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra,** here on Mondays, kicks off the JVC Jazz Festival week when it's joined by **Slide Hampton** on June 21.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, a Photographic Portrait of Germany"** gathers a hundred and fifty photographs from Sander's catalogue of Germans—including "Composer," "Pastrycook," "Member of Hitler Youth," "Peddler," "Match Seller," and "Gypsy"—taken between 1911 and 1952. Sander worked through the war years, but his project was not a favorite of the Nazis, who impounded a book of the photographs in 1936 and destroyed the plates. Under the category "Political Prisoners," there's a portrait of the photographer's son Erich in a cell, and under "The Last People," a photograph of Erich's death mask. The project inspired Steichen's "Family of Man" as well as chillier Becher and Struth prints shown in an adjacent gallery. Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Childe Hassam, American Impressionist"** is the first museum retrospective of the artist's work since 1972. A hundred and twenty seascapes, landscapes, and city scenes, executed in oil, watercolor, and pastel, are on display, including Hassam's famous flag series, which documents patriotism in the streets of New York during the First World War. Opens June 10. ♦ **"Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy."** Through Aug. 15. ♦ **"Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)."** Through July 4. ♦ **"Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century."** Through Aug. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Jean Shin's **"Projects 81,"** a site-specific mural and hanging sculpture, has been fashioned from the cast-off clothing of MOMA employees. Opens June 10. ♦ The exhibition **"Tall Buildings"** includes photographs, architectural plans, and models documenting skyscrapers around the world. Opens June 16. ♦ **"Fashioning Fiction in Photography Since 1990."** Through June 28. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—More than thirty sculptures are gathered in **"Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things,"** including a recently discovered "Sleeping Muse." It's an unfinished fourth in what had been thought to be a series of three, and will be on public view for the first time. Opens June 11. ♦ **"Speaking with Hands: Photographs from the Buhl Collection."** Through Sept. 8. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—Thomas Hart Benton's **"The Arts of Life in America"** revisits the Whitney, which sold the five panels when it moved in 1954. Through Jan. 2. ♦ **"Evidence of Impact: Art and Photography 1963-1978."** Through Oct. 20. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors"** presents some two hundred frogs in glass-walled habitats. Stars include the saucer-size African bullfrogs, who have been wrangling with the frog keepers for control of the tongs that are used to feed them frozen mice, and the Chinese gliding frogs, whose toe webbing spreads wide enough to allow them to hang-glide. The cen-

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terpiece of the show is a large vivarium filled with seventy-five dart-poison frogs; cameras inside the glass walls can be swivelled, zoomed, and focussed with a pair of joysticks to get a closer look at the jewel-bright hoppers. There's a Webcam, too, for those who want to watch from home. Kids will be thrilled. Through Oct. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

ISAMU NOGUCHI GARDEN MUSEUM
32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from an old photo-engraving factory. The museum has been closed for renovations for two and a half years; it reopens with year-round hours and a new program of temporary exhibitions. The first of these will be **"Isamu Noguchi: Sculptural Design,"** an installation by Robert Wilson. Museum reopens June 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—It's all about the face: the sloping nose, the close-set almond eyes, the tight button mouth. Throw in a swanlike neck and impossible, sloping shoulders and you've got a Modigliani. **"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth"** presents portraits of Montparnasse denizens like Jean Cocteau and Picasso, along with reclining nudes, the brief "Caryatid" series of paintings, and sculptures. Depending on your taste for his archetypal figures, the cumulative effect of this retrospective can be either mesmerizing or a bit wearisome. Through Sept. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

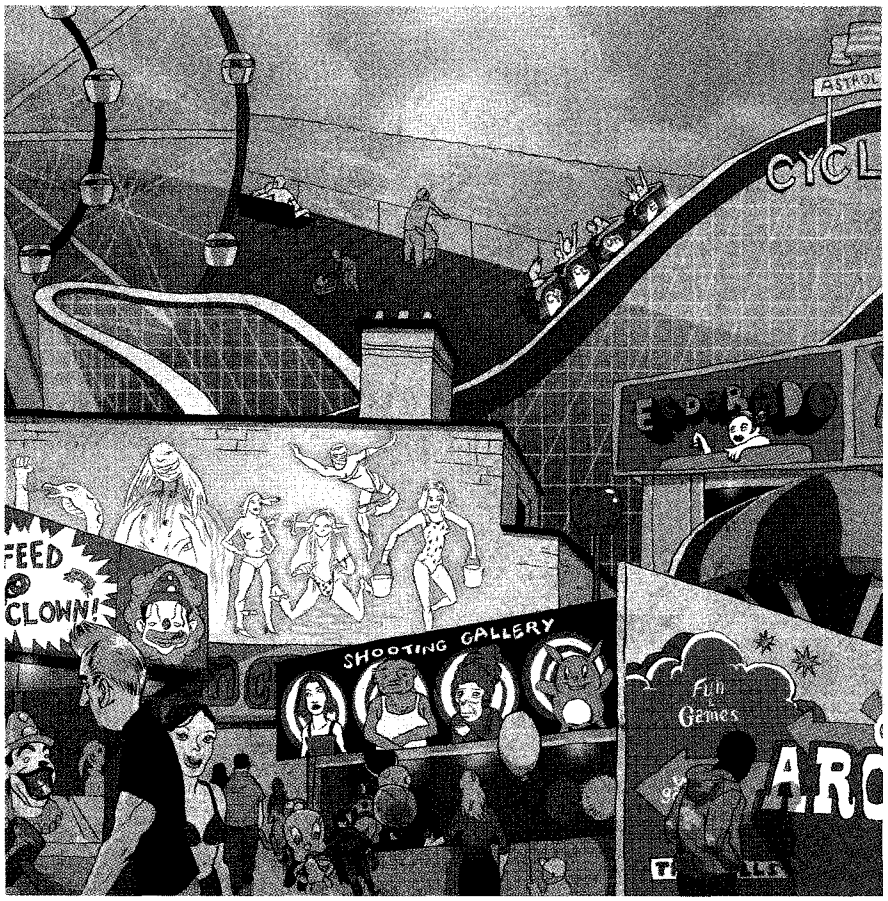
GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

GERHARD RICHTER
Thirty years' worth of landscapes further demonstrate Richter's interest in the photography-painting nexus. The earliest canvas, from 1964, includes four oddly framed views of Egyptian monuments that show how tourist snapshots make greatness mundane. After that Richter veered from the epic peaks of "Davos" (1981) to the lush greenery of "Buschdorf" (1985) to the quotidian rural outbuildings of "Hahnwald" (1997). The nineteenth-century landscape tradition also looms in "Ruhrtalbrücke" (1969), whose inevitable source is "Monk by the Sea," Caspar David Friedrich's dissertation on the sublime. The main difference is that Richter separates ground from pinkish sunrise sky with a guardrail, keeping the soaring Romantic spirit in check. Through July 3. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

STANLEY SPENCER
Twenty-five pale drawings, many of them consummate, by the English allegorist (1891-1959) afford intimate pleasures of connoisseurship. The pictures include portraits, but most are studies for the religious paintings that tracked intimations of the divine in Spencer's beloved home town of Cookham. Line was his forte; witness the massy, active figures in arrangements both august and lively. Even his swiftest sketches—girls gathering flowers, men lounging in a boat—tend to become mighty murals in recollection. Through July 27. (CDS, 76 E. 79th St. 212-772-9555.)

NEIL WELLIVER
The implacable Maine landscape painter almost charms in a show of smallish, full-dress studies for his very large, dauntingly adept major works. Welliver has a genius for light-riddled scraps of woods, rocks, water, and mountains, merging reality with an idea of reality in a way that is reminiscent of Wallace Stevens's poetry, only much colder. In a catalogue of the show, the poet Mark Strand finely observes that Welliver's works "embody a vision so uncompromised and of such compact immensity that the viewer is powerless before them." Through June 18. (Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828.)



The Dreamland Artist Club, a collective of established and emerging artists, has banded together to paint rides, backdrops, and games at Coney Island. Opens June 12.

TOMER HANUKA

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

LARS FISK
Fisk's effort to corner the market on fakeness focusses here on the Western love of all things Eastern—art, furniture, fashion—during the eighteenth-century chinoiserie craze. The best example is a lenticular photograph of a McDonald's drive-through that has been digitally reshaped to resemble a pagoda. Other bits of reconfigured Asiana include a cheap plastic toy lavished with lacquer, a steaming teapot (there's an ultrasonic fog generator inside), and a mini "Garden Folly" made of gaudily painted bricks and wisps of artificial foliage. Calling them flimsy or phony would be construed as high praise. Through June 12. (Taxter & Spengemann, 505 W. 22nd St. 212-924-0212.)

ANISH KAPOOR
A sculptor known for deep colors, hollowed-out spaces, and forays into the sublime tests the limits of biomorphic form. A stainless-steel suite includes the sharp-pointed "Spire," the humped "Pregnant Square," and the lumpen "Sack." The black lacquer "Vortex" burrows into a wall, recalling earlier installations. "Whiteout," a hollowed-out cube with sides of indeterminable depth, riffs on minimalism but, like much of the work here, is little more than an optical curiosity. Through June 25. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

DANIEL RICHTER
This German painter signals his allegiance to the legacy of neo-expressionism with carnival colors and swirling, seasick perspectives. A mournful gorilla carries a dead bird down a blue stairway; a black horse snarls or whispers to a white one; crowds of dancing people seem to be viewed through some night-vision scope that registers heat and motion as pulsations of neon. Poised at an odd juncture between decoration and delirium, Richter's pictures are too imagistically nightmarish to be eye candy, but too formally pretty to really shock. Through June 19. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

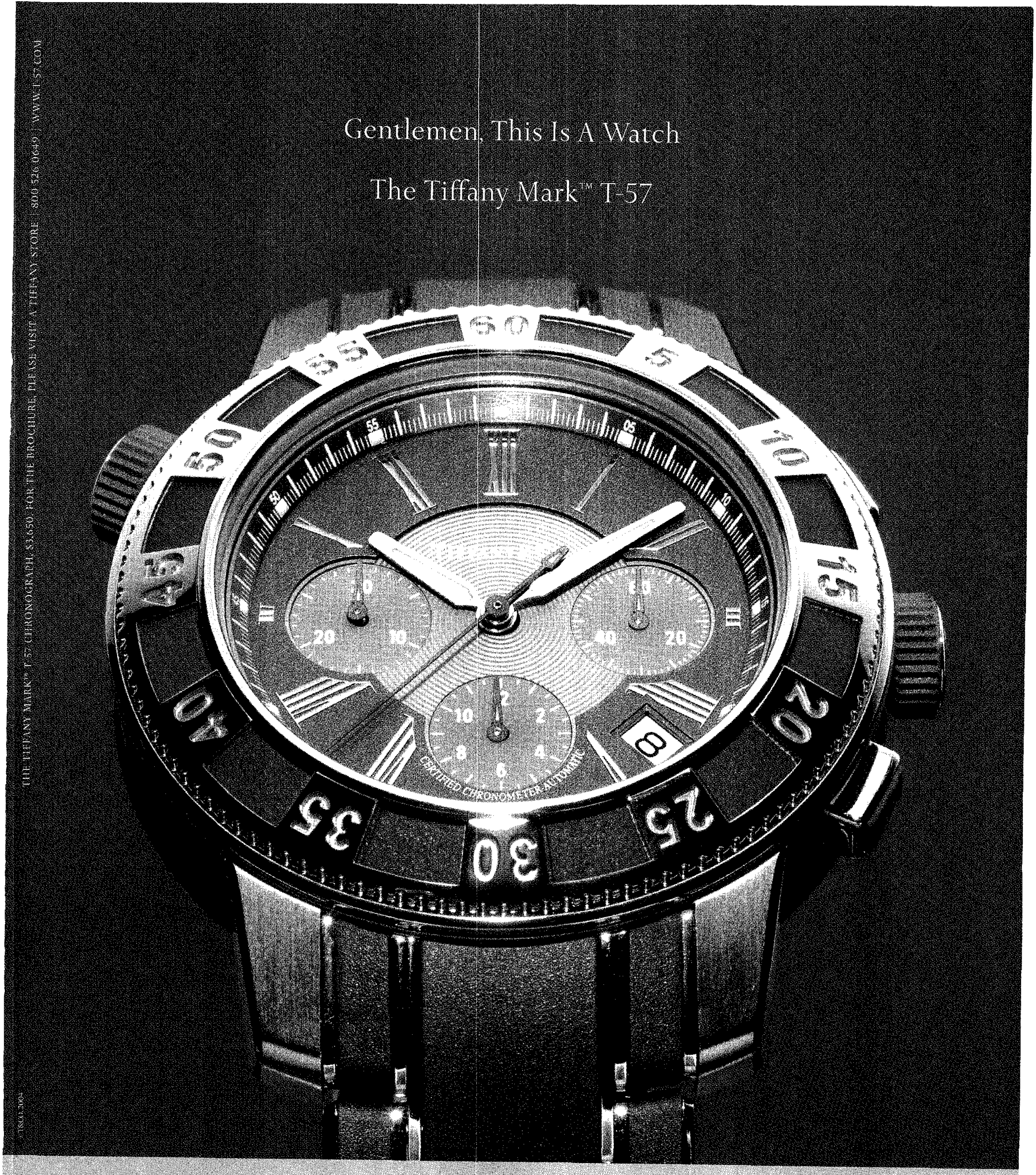
Short List

WALTON FORD
Kasmin, 511 W. 27th St. 212-563-4474.
Opens June 9.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

JOHN BISBEE
Three tons of welded twelve-inch steel spikes sounds like a recipe for heavy-handed machismo. In Bisbee's hands, the spikes are transformed into objects of surprising grace—more Andy Goldsworthy than Richard Serra. "Grist" is like a bird's nest built with fragile straw filaments. The spikes in "Slack" are welded end to end, creating five dynamic, intersecting coils. "Scree" is a pileup of delicately constructed balls—like molecules or, perhaps, hollow maces—stacked almost to the ceiling in a corner. The gallery's wide garage door is left open in warm weather, attracting passersby who might not usually go to galleries but can't help entering after glimpsing the media-defying marvels inside. Through June 26. (Plane Space, 102 Charles St. 917-606-1268.)

OLAV CHRISTOPHER JENSSEN
A substantial show of lyrically eccentric abstracts by the Norwegian Berliner graces a new, gemütlich Greenwich Village gallery. Jenssen's flat, globby forms—doodlish, meandering drawing and little painterly cadenzas (washes, drips, slathers, flurries of thick brushwork)—are offset with lots of white space on squarish canvases about six feet high. Black, purple, and green dominate an acerbic palette. Jenssen seems never to repeat himself. Each painting has the awkward,



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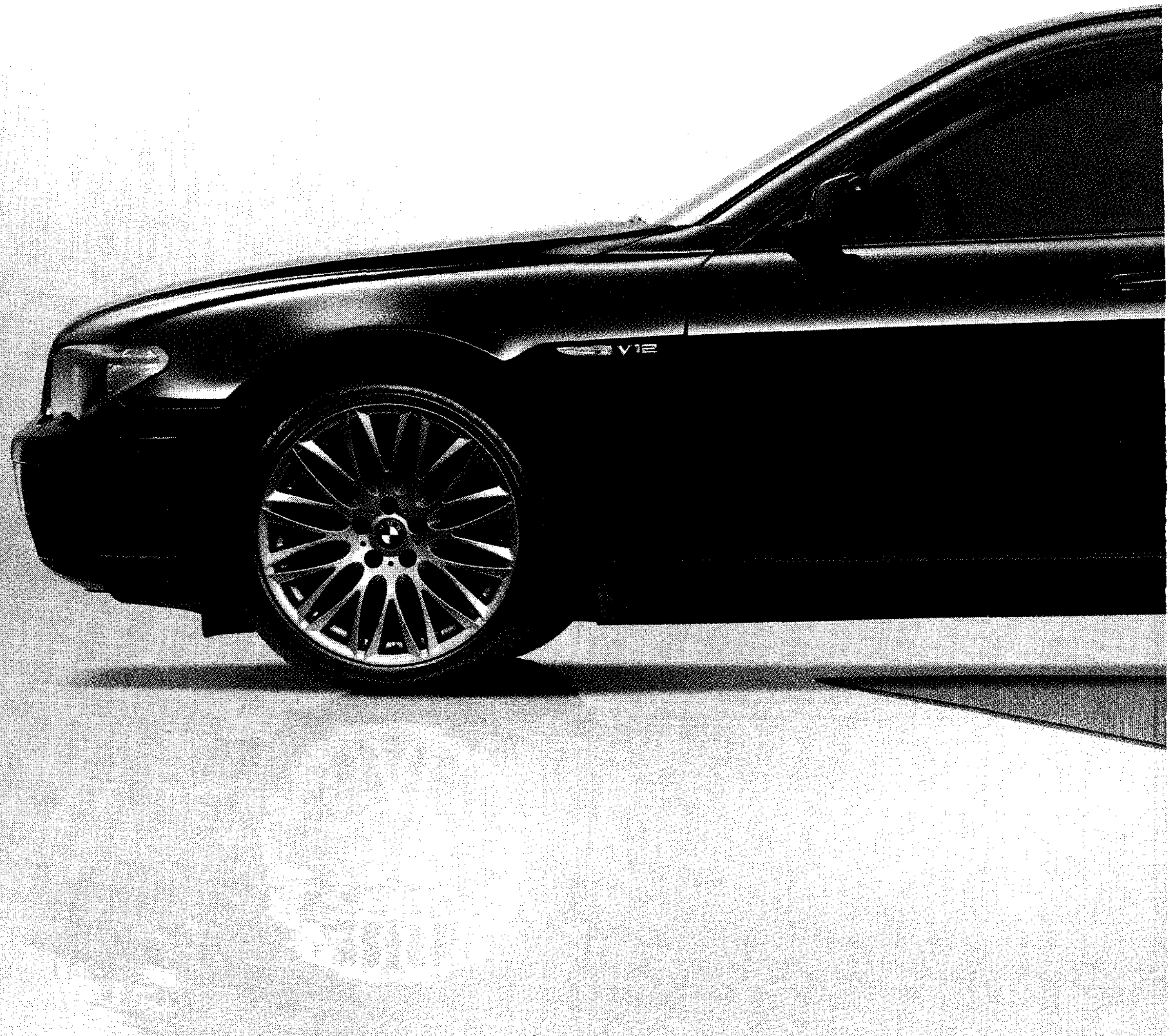

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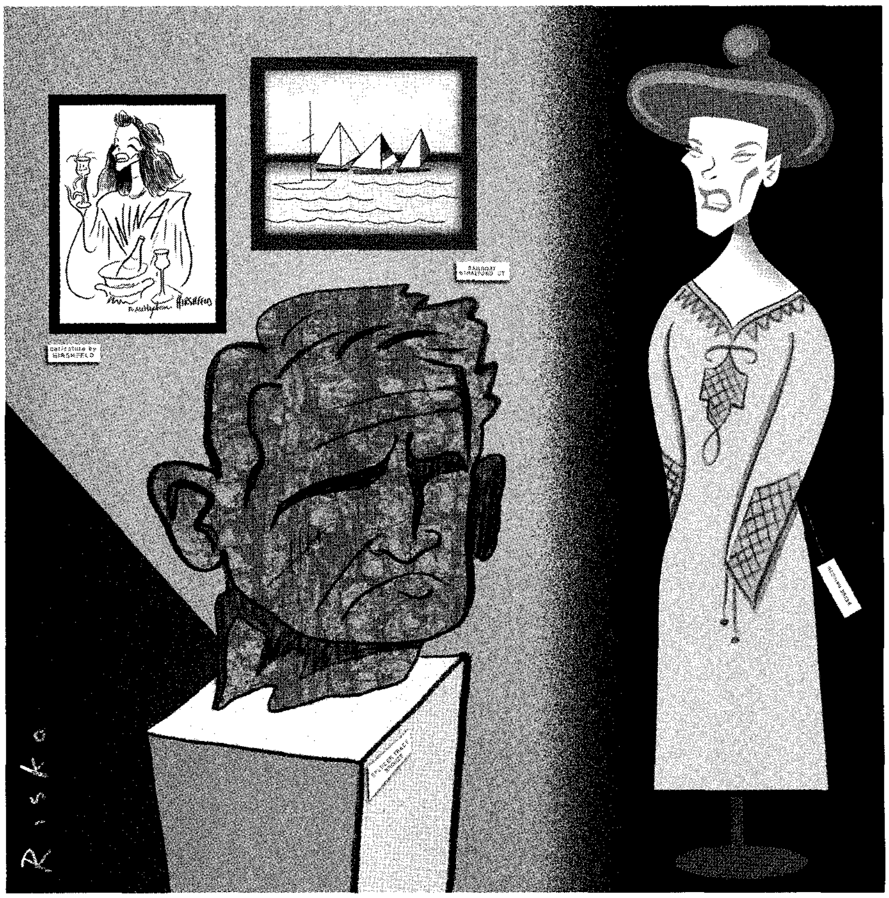

Sotheby's auctions property from the estate of Katharine Hepburn on June 10–11.

freshening air of a whole new start. Through June 19. (Tracy Williams, 313 W. 4th St. 212-229-2757.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA
Thorns, knives, and surrealistic chairs recur in these big (nearly three feet square), self-consciously beautiful, and mysterious images encased in resin. González Palma, a Guatemalan who now lives in Argentina, used high-contrast Kodalith film to photograph staged scenes. He then attached enlarged transparencies to gold leaf that had been mounted on red paper and painted over with a watery layer of bitumen. Brushstrokes and bits of red showing through the gold make for a luminous patina reminiscent of old Christian icons. Some of the images—like that of a shirtless man at a table in one panel of a diptych who sits opposite a skull wearing a cone-shaped hat—are reminiscent of Joel-Peter Witkin, but González Palma only flirts with the macabre. He deals in poetic allusion of the lyrical sort. Through July 2. (Robert Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 212-989-7600.)

ANDREAS GURSKY
Gursky's first show in New York since a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art three years ago is made up of ten huge color prints, including carefully detailed shots of the endless rows of beach umbrellas at Rimini, cattle stockades in Colorado and Japan, a basket-weaving factory in Vietnam, and a garbage dump in Mexico City. Usually taken from a great distance with an immense depth of field, these photographs encompass more than the human eye can take in at once, and, like a Rothko or a Frederick Church painting, they can be disorienting. Through June 27. (Matthew Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

CINDY SHERMAN
The artist as circus. Sherman's large new photographs of herself in crude clown costume and makeup, against digitally created backgrounds in trumpeting colors, stun at first glance. Then the work's transparent artifice—the costumes are thrown together, mere schmattes—and the richness of the artist's character acting become clearer. Moping, simpering, and strutting, the fiercely individualized clowns gaze outward, but not at us. In worlds of their own, they are tatterdemalion gods and goddesses of full-throttle performance. If you think that these pictures aren't about you, you aren't thinking. Through June 26. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

ANDY WARHOL
A series of Polaroids show a topless Paloma Picasso staring at the camera, sometimes with a strange paper construction covering her forehead and one eye; in another series, Mick Jagger's naked torso and outstretched arms recall the early work of Robert Mapplethorpe. But this is Warhol, working in the late sixties and early seventies. The photographs were pasted into eleven small red notebooks and are being exhibited for the first time. The bulk of what's on view is pictures of friends at play: Kennedy children at the beach, Marisa Berenson eating an ice-cream sundae, Brigid Berlin mugging in aviator goggles and a red caftan. The gallery and the German publisher Steidl produced a boxed catalogue that faithfully recaptures, picture by picture, the immediacy of Warhol's Polaroids. Through June 19. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"GOVERNORS ISLAND"
The most affecting ruins are those created in a single cataclysmic moment, like Pompeii or Chernobyl. Photographs by Andrew Moore and Lisa Kereszi, commissioned by New York's Public Art Fund, address a less fraught event in this vein—the moment Governors Island was abandoned. (The Coast Guard left in 1996, ending two and a half centuries of military use.) The pictures include banal tableaux—a dusty Burger King, bowling balls left midgutter—and more portentous ones, such as the plaque honoring the soldiers who served in the Meuse-Argonne campaign of the First World War. They are sharp and full of intense color, and often both sad and inadvertently funny. Through July 8. (Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. 212-935-3960.)

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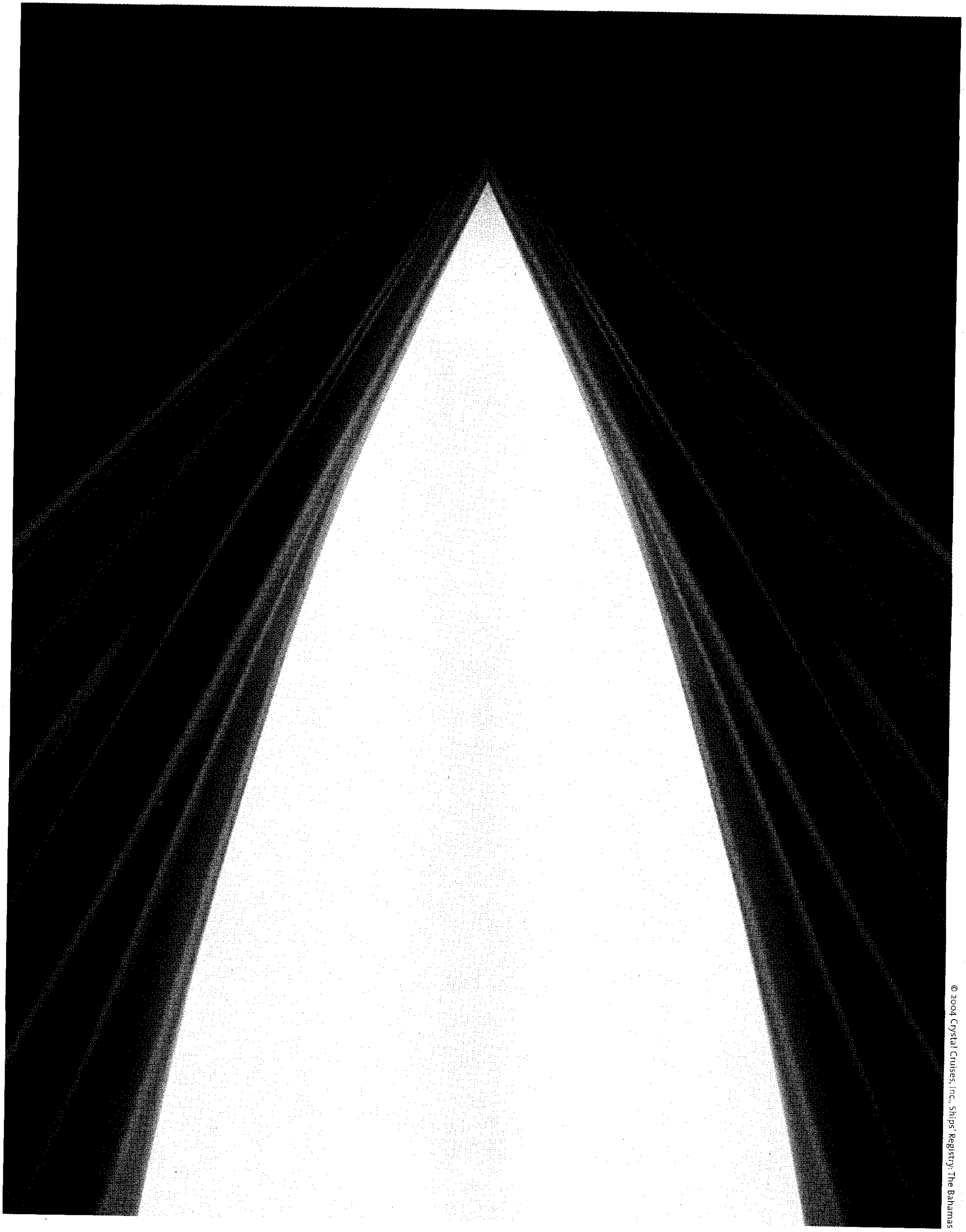

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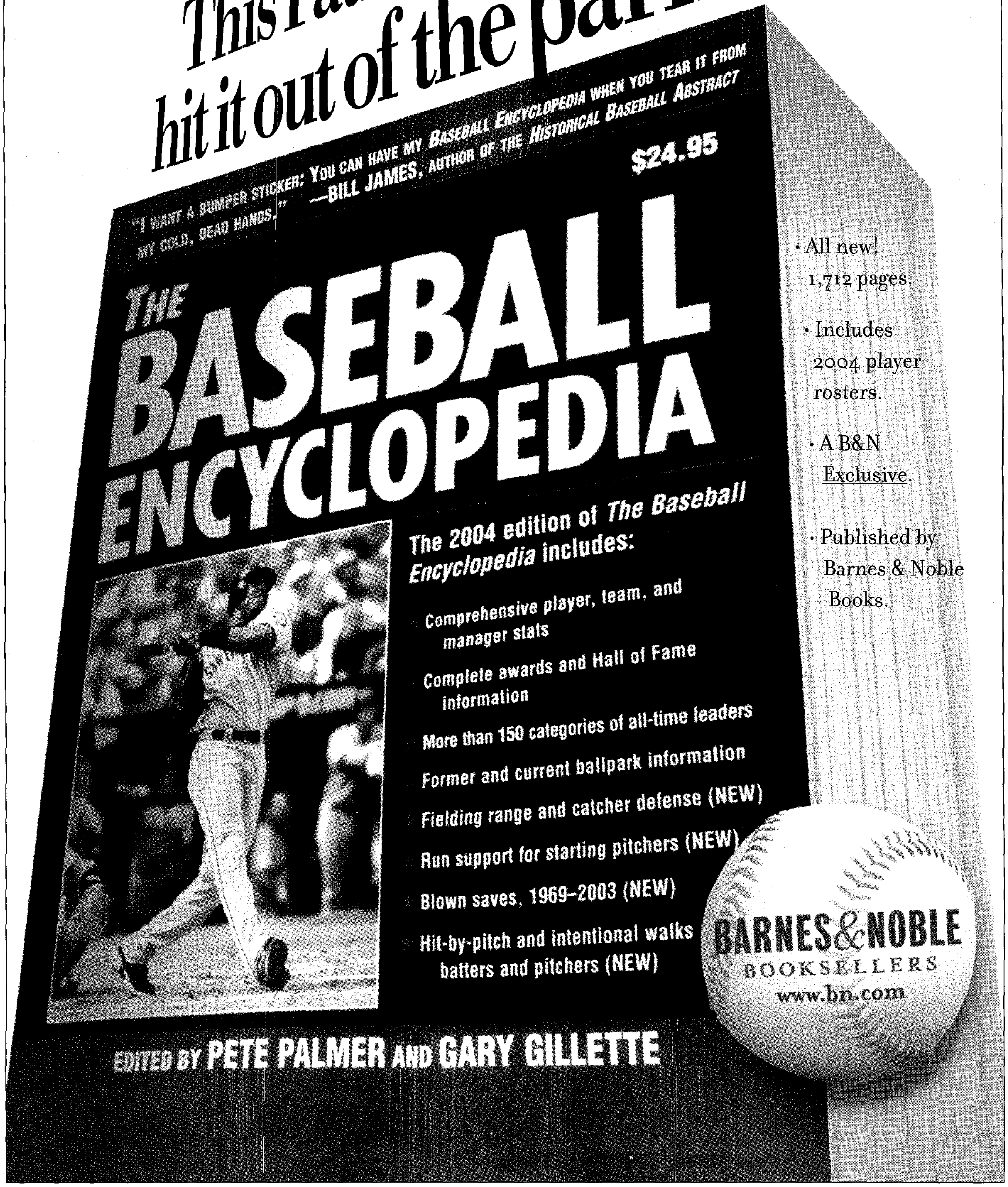
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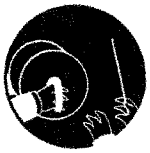
SWANN
June 10 at 10:30 A.M.: Philip Guston's gouache "Two Forms II" (expected to bring up to sixty thousand dollars) is the highlight of a sale of American drawings and watercolors. ♦ June 17 at 10:30 A.M.: An auction of maps, atlases, historical and natural-history prints, and ephemera. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

"MET IN THE PARKS"
The Metropolitan Opera spreads its wings with a round of free performances in the parks of New York and New Jersey. The first of two operas, running in repertory, is a strongly cast **"Nabucco,"** featuring the robust baritone Mark Delavan in the title role and Andrea Gruber singing Abigaille; Joseph Colaneri conducts. (Great Lawn, Central Park; enter at 86th St. June 15. ♦ Brookdale Park, Bloomfield, N.J. June 18.) ♦ The second is **"Madama Butterfly,"** with a cast headed by Kallen Esperian and Richard Leech; Julius Rudel. (Great Lawn, Central Park. June 16. ♦ Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick, N.J. June 19.) ♦ With Cynthia Lawrence and Eduardo Villa; Steven Crawford. (Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx.

CLASSICAL NOTES



HECTOR AND CHARLES
Among the many composers whose anniversaries are being celebrated this season, Berlioz and Ives—the thin-skinned Parisian sophisticate and the flinty Connecticut curmudgeon—are a likelier pair than one might think. Both were haunted by the culture of the past (Berlioz by Gluck and Virgil, Ives by Brahms and Emerson) but pressed bravely into the future; both wrote music that alternated the grandest of gestures with moments of disconcerting intimacy.

When, in 1856, Berlioz orchestrated "Nuits d'Été," a set of six rapturous, gloomy songs on poems by Théophile Gautier, he had six different voice types in mind, providing a special challenge for performers who sing the songs as a cycle. The countertenor David Daniels has just recorded the work (on Virgin) with the conductor John Nelson and the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris. This is a bit of a stunt for a performer whose excessively poised performances can sometimes cloy, but his tenor-to-soprano range easily handles the job, and his phrasings are sensitively wrought. The disk is filled out with appealing performances of songs by Ravel (the diaphanous "Cinq Mélodies Populaires Grecques") and Fauré, and Nelson conducts instrumental works by all three composers (including a surprisingly muscular account of Ravel's "Pavane").

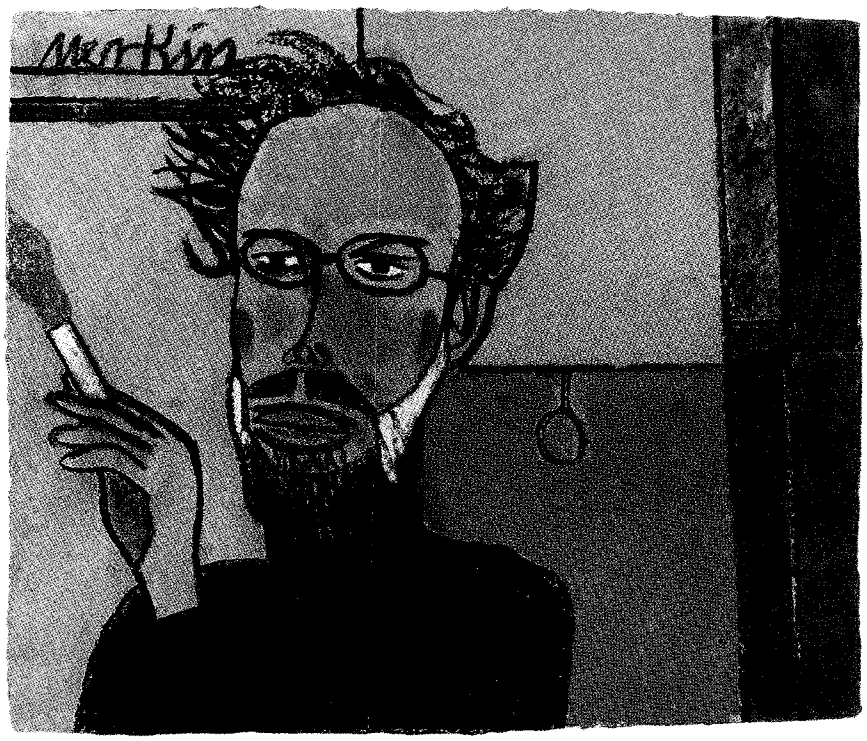
The mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, no mean Berliozian herself, has released a new album with the pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard (on Warner Classics) that features a more essential balance of vocal and instrumental music, all by Ives—the "Concord" Sonata and a slate of seventeen songs. Aimard, a pianist at his best with new music, is an ideal fit for Ives; his view of the composer—as a brilliant savage needing to be tamed—is very European, but his affection for the Sonata is obvious, and his supple, rocking rhythms give these long and craggy movements a consoling continuity. (Emmanuel Pahud and Tabea Zimmermann drop in to perform the very brief optional passages for flute and viola.) Graham's singing, as usual, has a pleasing clarity and warmth; her unselfconscious performances of such masterworks as "Serenity," "The Circus Band," and "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" are delivered with a keen intelligence and a lovely, rounded tone that make us treasure this difficult music all the more.

—*Russell Platt*

"OFF BROADWAY"
In a rented space across from the Gourmet Garage in SoHo, four intrepid young Magnum photographers—Thomas Dworzak, Alex Majoli, Paolo Pellegrin, and Ilkka Uimonen—have designed a show of their work from various wars and catastrophic social upheavals, including those in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Ethiopia, and Kosovo. Upstairs, the pictures are presented fairly straightforwardly. Downstairs, in a dark, brick-walled room, a soundtrack composed by Fabio Barovero, a founder of the band Mau Mau, accompanies a slide show of photographs projected onto a temporary cloth wall. Other black cloth walls form cubicles for mini slide shows, including one of Dworzak's pictures of sexually suggestive Taliban portraits, taken in Kandahar, some of which appeared in these pages during the recent war in Afghanistan. The Taliban portraits are in bright colors, but most of the work in the show is black-and-white, with no attribution or titles. The effect is dramatic and searing. Through June 27. (60 Mercer St. 212-929-6000.)

Short List

WEEGEE
Ubu Gallery, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444. Through July 23.
"CIRCA 1947"
Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through June 12.



RICHARD MERKIN

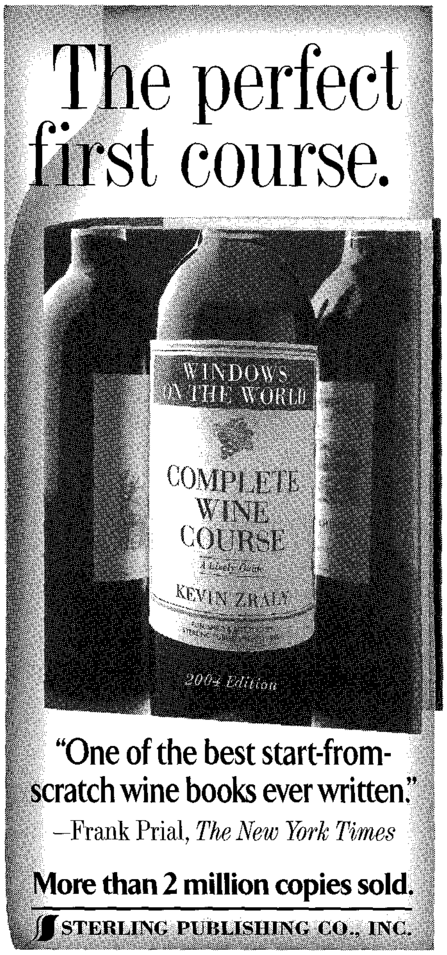
The Philharmonic plays Poul Ruders's "Final Nightshade" on June 10-12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
June 9 at 2: In addition to busts, Hellenic jewelry, Egyptian sarcophagi, and Roman mosaics, there are some curiosities to be found in this sale of antiquities, including a beautiful and terrifying set of eighteen Roman silver medical instruments.♦ June 10 at 10:15 A.M. and 2 and June 11 at 10:15 A.M.: This sale of property from the estate of Katharine Hepburn is refreshingly lacking in grand works of art or flashy jewels; the objects and mementos here—African artifacts, a Burberry vest, a Tiffany silver ice bucket, straw hats—speak of a life well lived, a sense of comfort and ease, and a complete disregard for pretense. So, too, do Hepburn's own hitherto unknown paintings, many of which are watercolors of places she loved and knew well or travelled to, all in a quasi-Impressionist style that is cool and relaxed. ♦ June 17 at 2: The entire contents of Frank Lloyd Wright's San Francisco office—right down to the redwood-plywood walls—are the crowning glory of a sale of twentieth-century design. ♦ June 18 at 10:15 A.M., 2, and 3:30: Medicine, alchemy, art, poetry, and religion are among the subjects explored and illustrated in the books and manuscripts featured in these sales, which include a letter from Tolstoy to his English translator, Alymer Maude, written in a neat, loopy cursive Russian, and a first edition of Galileo's cleverly argued "Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems," the work that brought his career to an abrupt and unhappy end. The last session includes a trove of documents relating to Texas history. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
June 15 at 10 A.M.: This sale of exquisite twentieth-century domestic accoutrements includes two standouts, each expected to bring over half a million dollars. The first, from the collection of Doris Duke, is a Tiffany leaded-glass lamp whose ripples and jewels depict nine dragonflies hovering over sun-dappled water; the other is a bronze armchair by the French designer Armand Albert Rateau, modestly titled "Model No. 1793," commissioned by the financier George Blumenthal after a chance meeting with Rateau on a transatlantic crossing. ♦ June 17 at 10 A.M.: An auction of Old Master paintings is highlighted by Jan Lievens's "Portrait of a Boy in Persian Dress" (circa 1631). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

PHILLIPS
June 10 at 11 A.M.: A big day at the upstart auction house begins with a sale of contemporary art works. ♦ June 10 at 4 and 7: A pair of sinuous "folded" chairs and a matching table, made in 1963 by the Scandinavian designer Grete Jalk, are one of the highlights of this sale of modern and contemporary design. Though many of the prominent design elements among the included lots—for instance, low tables, represented here in rosewood, by Louis Sognot, and in ebonized oak, by Charlotte Perriand—have been simplified and appropriated by outlet stores, some remain beyond commodification, such as Maison Desny's "Solaris"-like table lamps, vases, and cigarette boxes. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)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June 22.) (All concerts begin at 8. No tickets required. For more information, call 212-362-2000. Through June 26.)

VERTICAL PLAYER REPERTORY: "JENŮFA"
Making the most of its brick-walled storefront space, Cobble Hill's English-language opera company recasts Janáček's turbulent drama of Moravian village life as a chamber opera set in rural Pennsylvania in the nineteen-sixties. Charles Baird directs; Nizan Leibovich conducts a professional cast and chamber ensemble and a volunteer chorus. (219 Court St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-539-2696. June 15, June 17, and June 22 at 8; June 19 at 4; and June 20 at 7.)

MIDAMERICA PRODUCTIONS: TANEYEV'S "AGAMEMNON"
Sergei Taneyev, Russia's leading academic musician of the fin de siècle (and an ardent disciple of Tchaikovsky), composed a massive setting of Aeschylus' Oresteia, of which "Agamemnon" is merely the first act. Peter Tiboris conducts his Manhattan Philharmonic, the Russian Chamber Chorus, and a cast including the soprano Nina Terentieva, the bass Stefan Szkafarowsky, and (in a speaking role) Olympia Dukakis in a concert performance billed as the American première of the score. (Carnegie Hall. 212-239-4699. June 16 at 7.)

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS
A nurturing body for new work hosts two concerts at Dance Theatre Workshop. June 9 at 7:30: Melanie Mitrano and Paul Sperry sing new songs by Tom Cipullo, John Musto, and others. ♦ June 10-11 at 7:30: Scenes from two operas in progress, Jorge Martín's "Before Night Falls" and Martin Hennessy's "A Letter to East 11th Street" (with the tenor Michael Slattery). (219 W. 19th St. No tickets required.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

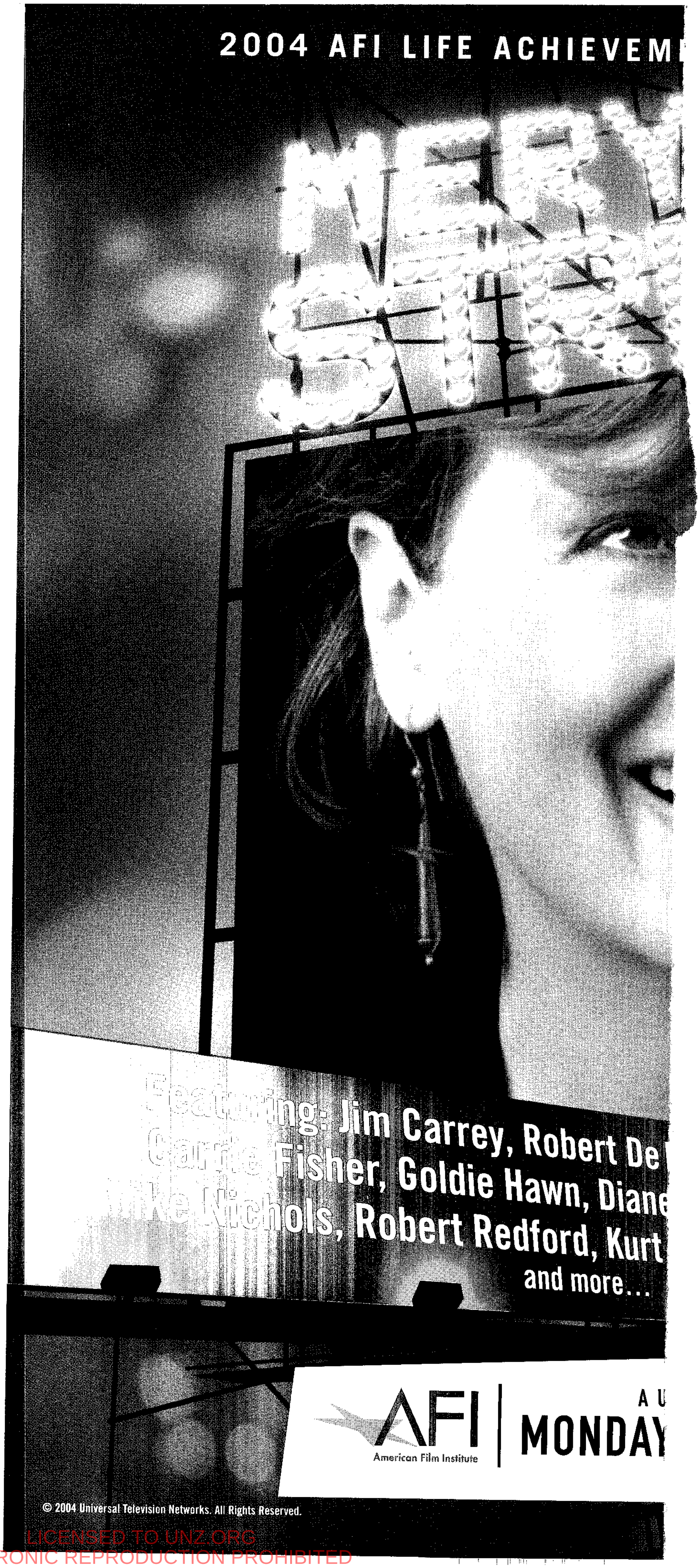
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel's final concerts of the season emphasize his technical finesse and eclectic interests. The first program, which ranges from the hyperemotional Romanticism of Schumann's Second Symphony to the elegantly dry melodies of Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor (with Gil Shaham), opens with the world première of "Final Nightshade—an Adagio of the Night," by the Danish composer Poul Ruders, whose complex, bewitching music combines extravagant instrumental colors with a cool, Nordic tone. (June 10 at 7:30, June 11 at 2, and June 12 at 8.) ♦ Maazel ends the season with Mahler's Symphony No. 3, joined by the contralto Anna Larsson, the American Boychoir, and the Women of the Westminster Choir. (June 16-17 at 7:30 and June 18-19 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY
Michael Gandolfi's delicately expressive "Points of Departure" (which was recorded on a now legendary Orpheus disk) is one of the finest American orchestral works of the nineteen-eighties, the product of a talented young modernist who dared to be simple without losing his soul. It's the opening piece in George Rothman's latest concert with the orchestra, which also includes a rarity by Prokofiev (the Piano Concerto No. 4, a left-hand work performed by Frederic Chiu) and a warhorse by Mozart (the Symphony No. 40 in G Minor). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. June 10 at 8.)

GOLDMAN MEMORIAL BAND
The city's third-oldest professional music organization (after the Philharmonic and the Met), still going strong, offers a pair of free Sunday concerts of eclectic fare (including music by Mendelssohn, Sousa, Offenbach, and John Kander, from his score for the musical "Chicago"). (New York Botanical Garden, the Bronx. June 13 at 3. ♦ Washington Square Park. June 20 at 3.)

RECITALS

ROULETTE FESTIVAL OF MIXOLOGY
The trombonist Jim Staley, the performance artist Richard Lerman (who accompanies his "Changing States No. 7" with a butane torch), and the vocal-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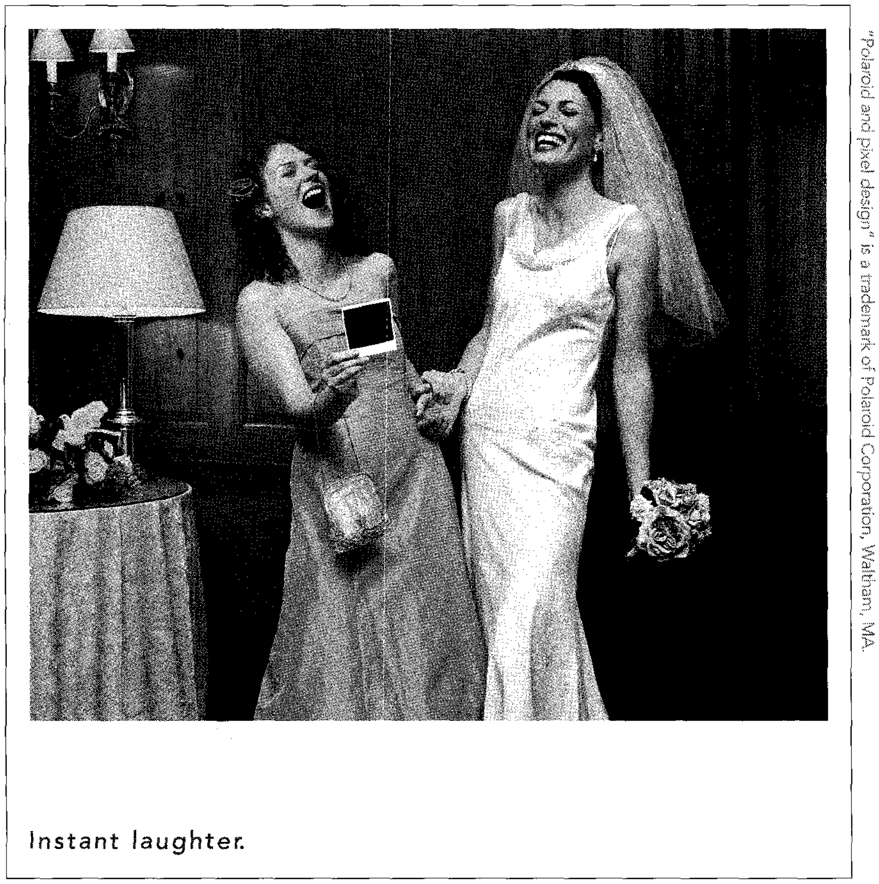
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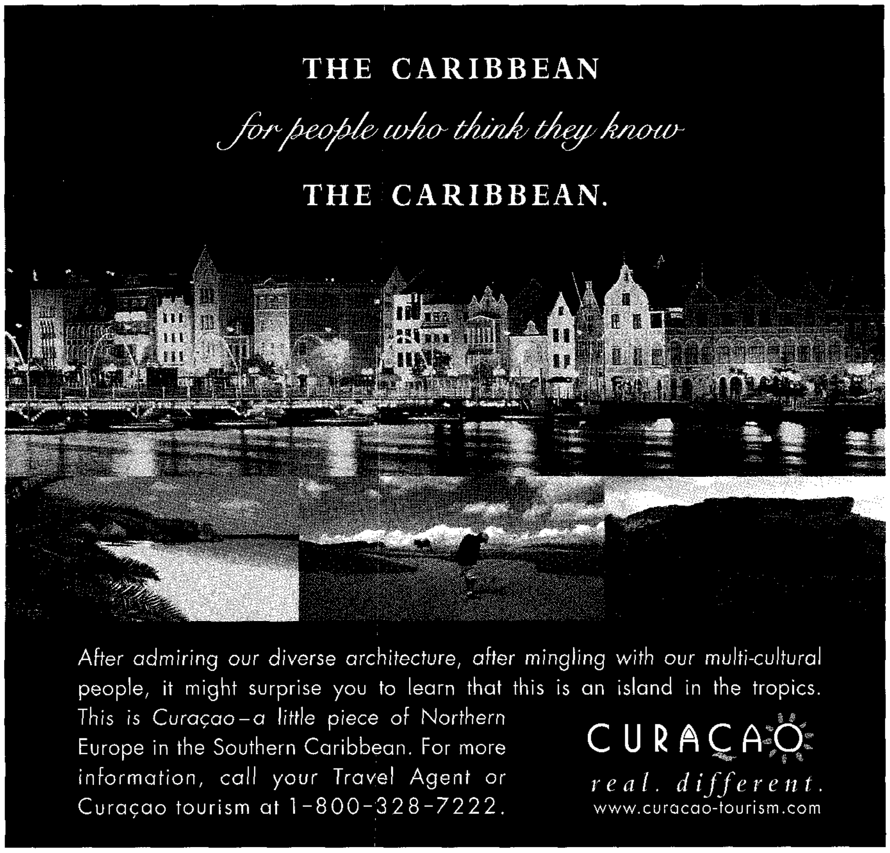
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ist Shelley Hirsch are among the decidedly radical composer-performers featured in the final days of the downtown collective's annual spring series of multimedia events. (Location One, 26 Greene St. 212-219-8242. June 9-13 at 8:30. For details, see www.roulette.org.)

BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS
Downtown's reigning new-music ensemble turns its attention to the Asian scene with world premières by two of Japan's leading composers, the elegant minimalist Somei Satoh ("Spells") and the turntable artist Nobukazu Takemura. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. June 10 at 7:30.)

MANNES BEETHOVEN INSTITUTE
In the second of two concerts, the school offers a window onto its annual round of master classes and private lessons: an all-Beethoven program that includes the Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109, and the Piano Trio in D Major, Op. 70, No. 1. The performers include the violinist Nicholas Kitchen, the cellist Colin Carr, and the pianist Robert McDonald. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. 212-580-0210. June 11 at 8.)

PRISM SAXOPHONE QUARTET: "YOUNG GUNS"
The intrepid group (featuring Taimur Sullivan) offers a slate of world-première works by Joshua Penman, Eliza Brown ("The Ghosts of Praha"), and other young hopefuls. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 11 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION
The octagonal drawing room of Manhattan's oldest house is the setting for "Water Music," a program of works by Purcell, Vivaldi, and Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre performed by the soprano Jessica Gould and the ensemble Brooklyn Baroque. (65 Jumel Terrace, between 160th and 162nd Sts. 212-923-8008. June 12 at 2.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 12 at 7:30 and June 13 at 4: The violinist Mark Peskanov and the harpsichordist David Shemer offer two programs of Baroque works by Bach, Buxtehude, and Forqueray. ♦ June 19 at 7:30 and June 20 at 4: An evening of Russian (or Russian-inspired) music by Arensky, Copland ("Vitebsk"), and Tchaikovsky (the Piano Trio in A Minor), performed by Trio Tchaikovsky. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For a full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL": DAVID SHIFRIN
The renowned clarinettist performs an all-Brahms program, joined by the pianist André-Michel Schub, the cellist Peter Wiley, and the Miró Quartet. (123 W. 43rd St. June 13 at 5. Free tickets, with a maximum of two per person, will be distributed beginning at noon on the day of the concert.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ALLIANCE FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN MUSIC
Think of Henry Cowell as the Thomas Edison of experimentalist music: he invented the tone cluster when the Wizard of Menlo Park was perfecting talkies. Cowell's work will be featured at the A.C.A.'s annual concert series, along with music by the contemporary composers Robert Carl, John Eaton, and many others. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. June 16-20. Tickets at the door. For details, see www.composers.com.)

SORABJI'S "OPUS CLAVICEMBALISTICUM"
Kaikhosru Sorabji, a British composer of Parsi extraction, had an eccentric, reclusive streak and for much of his life forbade performances of his work. But his 1930 masterpiece "Opus Clavicembalisticum," which has never been performed in New York, has mythic status among pianists because of its gargantuan length—more than four hours—and its contrapuntal complexity (highlights include a passacaglia with eighty-one variations). A performance by Jonathan Powell (who received acclaim for playing the work in London last fall) is the second of two Sorabji concerts this week, preceded by Donna Amato's world-première rendering of the Piano Symphony No. 5. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 17 at 8 and June 20 at 4.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The Jens Nygaard tribute series offers a program the eccentric archtraditionalist would have liked—

a concert of chamber versions of Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," Beethoven's Second Symphony, and Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel." Carl Nielsen's "Serenata in Vano" is the dark horse. (Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, Amsterdam Ave. at 76th St. 212-799-1259. June 21 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC SERIES
Frank Huang, the first-prize winner of the 2003 Walter W. Naumburg Violin Competition, performs (with the pianist Carol Wong) a concert that includes sonatas by Tartini (the "Devil's Trill"), Ravel, and Strauss along with music by Paganini and Arvo Pärt (the luminous "Fratres"). (Saugatuck Congregational Church, 245 Post Rd. E., Westport, Conn. 866-776-8745. June 11 at 8.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The venerable string-quartet festival, ensconced in a whitewashed shoebox hall with firm and clear acoustics, celebrates its seventy-fifth season by going back to basics. The complete Beethoven quartets will be played in a six-concert cycle by the Shanghai Quartet, the impeccably disciplined Asian-American ensemble. June 13 at 3: The Quartets in E-Flat Major, Op. 127; in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2; and in C Major (the third of the "Razumovsky" Quartets), Op. 59, No. 3. ♦ June 20 at 3: The Quartets in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3; in F Minor, Op. 95 (the "Serioso"); and in A Minor, Op. 132. (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"BLOOMSDAY ON BROADWAY"
The centennial celebration of Leopold Bloom's adventures in Dublin features more than a hundred actors reading passages from James Joyce's "Ulysses." It starts at noon with a quick (three-hour) tour, featuring excerpts from all eighteen chapters of the novel. Following this introduction, actors portraying Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and other authors present the reactions of Joyce's contemporaries to the novel. The rest of the afternoon is given over to explorations of "Circe," "Ithaca," and other episodes. Starting at 9:30 (and running past midnight), the affair comes to a close as the Irish actress Fionnula Flanagan reads the final chapter, Molly Bloom's unpunctuated, uncensored nighttime soliloquy. For those who wish to experience Molly's thoughts the way she delivers them (at home, in bed), "Bloomsday on Broadway" will also be broadcast live on WBAI, 99.5 FM. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 16. See This Week.)

MORE READINGS
June 9 at 7: Mark Mirsky, Jerome Charyn, and Steven Beeber read from their contributions to *Fiction* magazine. (South Street Seaport Museum, 12 Fulton St. 212-748-8735.) ♦ June 10 at 7: Ron Chernow offers selections from his biography "Alexander Hamilton." A reception follows at the Old Stone House of Brooklyn, a restored farmhouse devoted to the borough's history. (Middle School 51, Fifth Ave. at 4th St., Brooklyn. For reservations, call 718-768-3195.) ♦ June 13 at 7: The jazz singer Mark Murphy, the cabaret icon Julie Wilson, and other musicians join James Gavin for a song-filled reading from "Deep in a Dream," his biography of the trumpeter and vocalist Chet Baker. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-539-8770.) ♦ June 16 at 7: Kit Reed and Henry Wessells read from their science fiction. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
June 9 at 7: The artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude talk about their works in progress, including the "Gates" project for Central Park. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793.) ♦ June 21 at 6:30: The wildlife photographer Steve Winter recounts his adventures in Cuba, Myanmar, and other exotic corners of the world. (The Explorers Club, 46 E. 70th St. 212-628-8383.)

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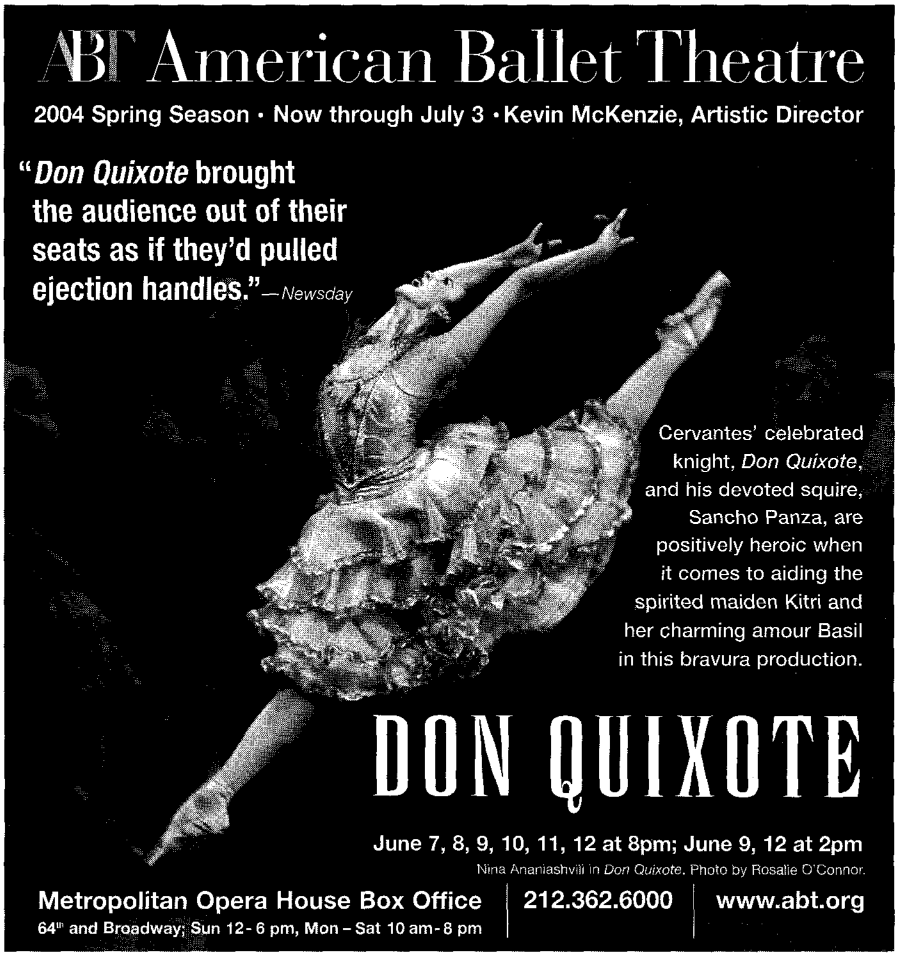

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Nina Ananiashvili in *Don Quixote*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

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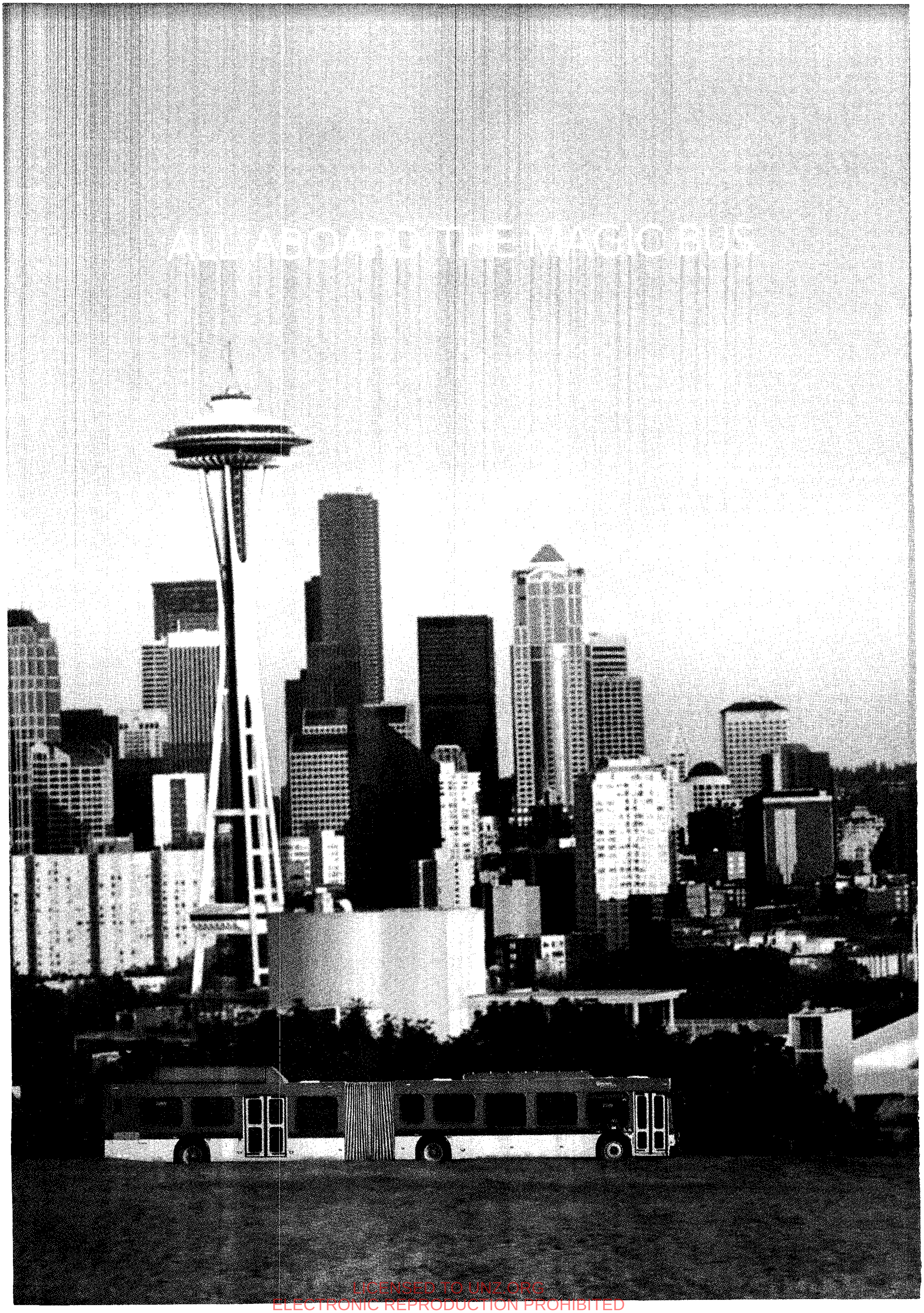

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MOVIES OPENING

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS
An adaptation of the Jules Verne novel, with Jackie Chan as Passepartout and Steve Coogan as Phileas Fogg. The cast also includes Kathy Bates, Owen Wilson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jim Broadbent, and John Cleese. Directed by Frank Coraci. Opening June 18.

BROADWAY: THE GOLDEN AGE
Rick McKay's documentary about the Great White Way features interviews with Elaine Stritch, Shirley MacLaine, Celeste Holm, Ann Miller, and others. Opening June 11. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
A sequel to the science-fiction action picture "Pitch Black," about an escaped convict (Vin Diesel) who can see in the dark. With Judi Dench and Colm Feore. Written and directed by David Twohy. Opening June 11.

DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY
Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughn play the captains of rival dodgeball teams, in a comedy written and directed by Rawson Marshall Thurber. With Christine Taylor and Gary Cole. Opening June 18.

FACING WINDOWS
Ferzan Ozpetek's romantic drama is set in an Italian village in which a young wife (Giovanna Mezzogiorno) covets her handsome neighbor (Raoul Bova) while also helping an old man recover his memory. In Italian. Opening June 18.

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY ARE MARRIED
Michael Pressman wrote and directed this comedy, in which he plays a theatre director who casts his wife as the lead in a new play he's working on. Opening June 11. (Quad Cinema.)

GARFIELD: THE MOVIE
Peter Hewitt directed this adaptation of the comic strip about the adventures of the lazy, lasagna-loving cat (voiced by Bill Murray). The human cast includes Breckin Meyer and Jennifer Love Hewitt. Opening June 11.

I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD
Clive Owen ("Croupier") plays a London gangster who's decided to disappear in Wales, in a thriller directed by Mike Hodges. With Charlotte Rampling, Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, and Malcolm McDowell. Opening June 18. (Angelika Film Center.)

IMELDA
A documentary portrait of the former First Lady of the Philippines Imelda Marcos. Directed by Ramona S. Diaz. In English and Tagalog. Opening June 9. (Film Forum.)

NAPOLEON DYNAMITE
In a comedy set in rural Idaho, a high-school eccentric who likes tetherball and lives with his grandmother, helps his friend run for class president. Co-written and directed by Jared Hess. Opening June 11.

SEDUCING DOCTOR LEWIS
The inhabitants of a rundown French-Canadian fishing village try to convince a big-city doctor to set up shop in town, in a comedy directed by Jean-François Pouliot. In French. Opening June 16. (Paris.)

THE STEPFORD WIVES
Frank Oz directed this remake of the 1975 thriller about a suburban Connecticut town where the women are strangely docile and obedient. The cast includes Bette Midler, Nicole Kidman, Matthew Broderick, Faith Hill, and Christopher Walken. Opening June 11.

THE TERMINAL
Steven Spielberg's new drama is the story of an Eastern European immigrant (Tom Hanks) who gets stranded in an American airport after a coup in his native country leaves him in diplomatic limbo. With Catherine Zeta-Jones, Stanley Tucci, and Diego Luna. Opening June 18.

FILM NOTES

BAADASSSSS!
In 1971, Mario Van Peebles's father, Melvin Van Peebles, made the X-rated blaxploitation movie "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song," starring himself as a bordello stud performer who kills two white cops and manages to escape (the movie concluded with Van Peebles running endlessly across hill and dale). "Baadasssss!" is Mario's layered re-creation of the making of "Sweetback" and the convulsive life around the production, which became a sizable hit. He plays his father, appropriating Melvin Van Peebles's body, his attitudes, his actions, and his treatment of his family (i.e., Mario himself, as a thirteen-year-old boy). The result is a complex homage: Mario turns his father into a sly, guarded, egotistical son of a bitch who nevertheless had to be that way to get the movie made; and he tries, at the same time, to top him as a filmmaker and a human being. The movie captures some of the manic desperation and easy pleasures of the period—the tumbling-into-bed sex as well as the crummy self-delusions by which people having a good time convinced themselves that they were making a revolution. The movie quickly reaches a pitch of manic activity and stays there for its entire length. It's an exhausting, and exhaustingly pleasurable, entertainment.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/31/04.) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

CARANDIRU
Hector Babenco's new film (his first after a long illness) examines the life of Brazilian inmates inside São Paulo's notorious prison, Carandiru, and the events leading up to a bloody riot (exceptionally filmed) in 1992. Babenco shifts his focus from inmate to inmate, telling the stories of what led to their incarceration with the same powerful street sense he employed so brilliantly in his earlier film "Pixote." The tales of hardship veer close to being maudlin at times—the director's empathy is ferocious and gets in the way of some of the questions that a viewer may ask. But thanks to stunning visuals (the squalor is bathed in heavenly light, and Babenco's camerawork has a Scorsese-like sweep), the movie represents passionate filmmaking at its best. In Portuguese.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center and BAM Rose Cinemas.)

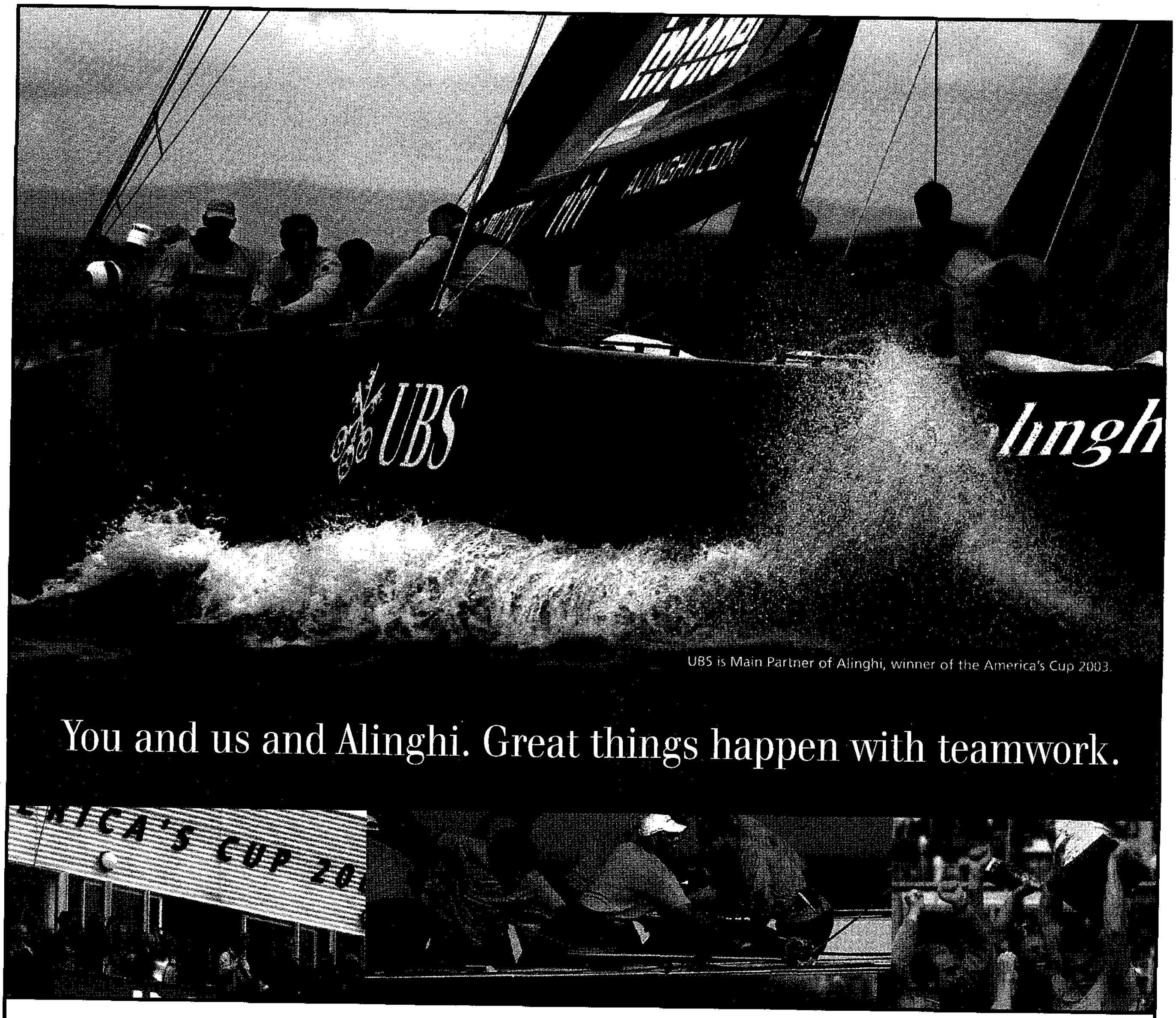
COFFEE AND CIGARETTES
Cinematic doodles from the writer-director Jim Jarmusch. The movie, seventeen years in the making, consists of a series of black-and-white vignettes involving caffeine and nicotine. While those two substances complement each other, Jarmusch, ever the hip mad scientist, throws together odd combinations of actors and singers. Some pairings—like the laconic comic Steven Wright and the Italian yo-yo Roberto Benigni—turn out to be duds, but other encounters—like the one between the hip-hoppers the RZA and the GZA and a woozy Bill Murray—have a singular, irreproducible chemistry. Jarmusch doesn't have any grand theme; he's just playing around. With Alfred Molina, Steve Coogan, Cate Blanchett, and Taylor Mead, who gives the film a wonderful valedictory moment when he mysteriously hears Mahler's "I Have Lost Track of the World."—*Michael Agger* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

CONTROL ROOM
A documentary, directed by Jehane Noujaim, about Al Jazeera, the Arab television station that pulls in forty million viewers without a single game show. The film was made during the invasion of Iraq by Coalition forces, an event that it covers from an angle not entirely shared by Fox News. On every side, there was a measure of wishful thinking; the staff at Al Jazeera, for example, most of them perspicacious and engaging in the extreme, appear genuinely dumbstruck when reports stating that American forces have reached the heart of Baghdad turn out to be true. More surprising still, the pivotal figure in the picture is an American—Lieutenant Josh Rushing, a press officer, who gives the Al Jazeera side of the argument a far more sympathetic hearing than the White House would consider wise. In fact, the film itself is more judicious in its choice of talking heads than in its delivery of basic information; by the end, we still know dangerously little about the origins, schedules, and funding of the station. Those who know Al Jazeera only as a bête noire of the Secretary of Defense, however, will relish the chance to see inside.—*Anthony Lane* (5/24/04) (Film Forum and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW
A cautionary tale disguised as a disaster flick. Roland Emmerich, who gave us aggressive aliens in "Independence Day" and unhelpfully large lizards in "Godzilla," has turned his attention to global warming—a foe so unsatisfying that you can't even shoot it down. Jack Hall (Dennis Quaid) is a climatologist who realizes, as a slice of the polar ice cap slides into the sea, that the end of the world (or, at any rate, of that half of the world that drives S.U.V.s) is nigh. Needless to say, nobody believes him until it's too late, by which time Los Angeles is being danced upon by tornadoes and New York is doing a convincing impersonation of a frozen Daiquiri. Millions perish, but that is not the problem. The problem is that Jack, based in Washington, needs badly to bond with his moony son (Jake Gyllenhaal), who is sitting tight in the New York Public Library with plenty to read and a cozy fellow-student (Emmy Rossum) to keep him warm. Meanwhile, the rest of the population is hurrying south to Mexico. The special effects rely less on credibility than on bombast, and the whole project is so dumb, ill-written, and condescending that it may become counterproductive, with viewers fleeing the cinema and vowing never to recycle again. With Ian Holm, stranded in every sense.—*A.L.* (6/7/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

THE MAN WHO ENVIED WOMEN
Yvonne Rainer's non-narrative Molotov cocktail of a movie is bracing, strident, provocative, infuriating, spontaneous, intellectualized, and—during a marathon Foucault reading—numbing. The movie's artist heroine perseveres through a split-up with her professor husband, eviction from her loft, and the death of her gynecologist on KAL Flight 007. Yet she still manages to think clearly enough to extrapolate sexual, racial, and national chauvinism from a cologne ad. Rainer refuses to turn the breakup of the marriage into a plot. Instead, she uses it as a hook on which to pin audiovisual collages, utilizing everything from magazine articles to Golden Age of Hollywood film clips. The woman is heard but not seen. The man, played by two different actors, is seen and heard incessantly, often psycho-babbling straight to the audience as he sits in a talk-show chair. As the dance critic Arlene Croce once wrote of a Rainer performance, "No description can impart the duration, calculated shock, or graded monotony of her effects." Originally released in 1985.—*Michael Sragow* (Anthology Film Archives; June 13 and June 16.)

MEAN GIRLS
A new term at high school is even more of a trauma for Cady (Lindsay Lohan) than it is for everybody else, since she is not just an out-of-towner but an



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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out-of-Africa, her parents having raised her as a bush baby. Now she is confronted with the complexity of school loyalties and fads, which—as we are reminded by innumerable slo-mo sequences with an added roartrack—are twice as bloodlusty as the lives of African fauna. Her first friends are Janis (Lizzy Caplan) and Damian (Daniel Franzese), who dare her to hang out with the second wave—a trio of acid beauties, led by the queenly Regina (Rachel McAdams). The twist is that Cady, in pretending to fall for their spoilt ways, really does fall for them, and the problem is that we ourselves never fall for this notion of Cady as weak-willed. Though the movie sags in the second half, your spirits are kept up by the steady flow of slashing lines—courtesy of Tina Fey, who not only wrote the script but also stars as Cady's teacher. If anything, the grownups—especially the school principal, played by Tim Meadows, of whom the picture needs much more—tend to nudge these pushy teen-agers into the wings. The movie, produced by Lorne Michaels and directed by Mark Waters, is often funny, but it was conceived by people who are plainly wiser and more worldly than their target audience, and there's something about that discrepancy that, you know, totally sucks.—*A.L.* (5/10/04) (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

Opening June 11, "Napoleon Dynamite," with Jon Heder as a high-school nerd.

JOHN HENDRIX

ONCE UPON A HONEYMOON

In this well-meaning catastrophe from 1942, Leo McCarey sends Cary Grant as a go-getting radio journalist and Ginger Rogers as a gold-digging Brooklynite hurtling across Europe, reaching each endangered country just before the Nazis invade it. Midway through, the status-blinded Rogers realizes, under Grant's exasperated tutelage, that her Austrian baron husband (Walter Slezak) is Hitler's front man and that her honeymoon has paved the way for the expansion of the Third Reich. The juxtaposition of stock newsreel footage and stock comedy proves increasingly grisly; Grant's newsman O'Toole and Rogers' ex-stripper O'Hara cutely mutter "O-O" (as in "uh-oh") as the Nazis goose-step across the Continent. At the movie's nadir they wind up mistaken for Jews and get tossed into a concentration camp. Boy, are they ever happy to see the American consul!—*M.S.* (Moving Image; June 20.)

THE SADDEST MUSIC IN THE WORLD

Another straightforward slice of corporate entertainment from Guy Maddin. Actually, by his standards this new picture really is close to intelligible. Isabella Rossellini, sporting a wig that appears to have been woven from cold egg noodles, plays Lady Port-Huntly, rich but legless, who runs a competition to discover, as the title suggests, the saddest music in the world. One of her former lovers (Mark McKinney) offers to represent America; he also has a drunken father (David Fox) and a pixielike girlfriend (Maria de Medeiros) who is both amnesiac and nymphomaniac—a far from impractical arrangement, when you consider it. The movie, set in Winnipeg in 1933, is shot with Maddin's habitual blend of jumpiness, spookiness, halation, and archaic levels of scratch and grain. The result does not so much flirt with the ridiculous as lie back and let the ridiculous do more or less what it wants, and Maddin aficionados will ask for nothing more. Once again, however, the unconverted may wonder what the fuss is about; when a director's storytelling is as overheated as this, why should the stories themselves have to be so wildly undercooked?—*A.L.* (5/10/04) (Sunshine Cinema.)

SAVED!

Mary (Jena Malone), a sweet-natured senior at the fundamentalist American Eagle Christian High School, in Maryland, tries to rescue the soul of her gay boyfriend by sleeping with him and winds up pregnant. A small-scale production (the budget was under five million dollars), this satirical comedy, written by Brian Dannelly and Michael Urban and directed by Dannelly, folds its barbs into a formulaic teen movie. The setting is a sunshiny suburban town that seems to have been scrubbed with a strong moral disinfectant, and the picture features the usual quarrels, flirtations, and pranks, culminating at the prom. Its villain, the pious Hilary Faye (Mandy Moore), who drops the Saviour's name into every third sentence, is the customary blond bitch who has everything going for her but wants more power. The heroes are the school's irregulars, who receive Mary as a friend—Patrick (Patrick Fugit), a Christian skateboarder; Cassandra (Eva Amurri), "the first Jew at American Eagle," a cocky prankster who speaks in tongues at a school assembly; and Hilary's brother Roland (Macaulay Culkin), who is wheelchair-bound and witty. Urban and Dannelly's script is too gentle and uncomplicated to be first-rate satire, but the movie has an affectionate, easy way about it that is very pleasing.—*D.D.* (5/31/04) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

SHREK 2

The happily ogred couple of Shrek (Mike Myers) and Princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz) visit Fiona's disapproving parents, King Harold (John Cleese) and Queen Lillian (Julie Andrews), and get assaulted at the palace by an aerial Fairy Godmother (Jennifer Saunders) who has some sort of crooked deal going with the king whereby her son, Prince Charming (Rupert Everett), gets to marry Fiona. Or something like that. Will Shrek and Fiona be tempted into human beauty and give up their natural state of ogretude? Will Donkey (Eddie Murphy) and Puss-in-Boots (Antonio Banderas), a duelling cat, help them retain their honor and beautiful green complexion? The movie is obvious, but consistently entertaining and animated in DreamWorks's "realistic" digitized style. Directed by Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury, and Conrad Vernon; written by J. David Stem, Joe Stillman, and David N. Weiss, who adapted, from a great distance, characters originally created by William Steig.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SUPER SIZE ME

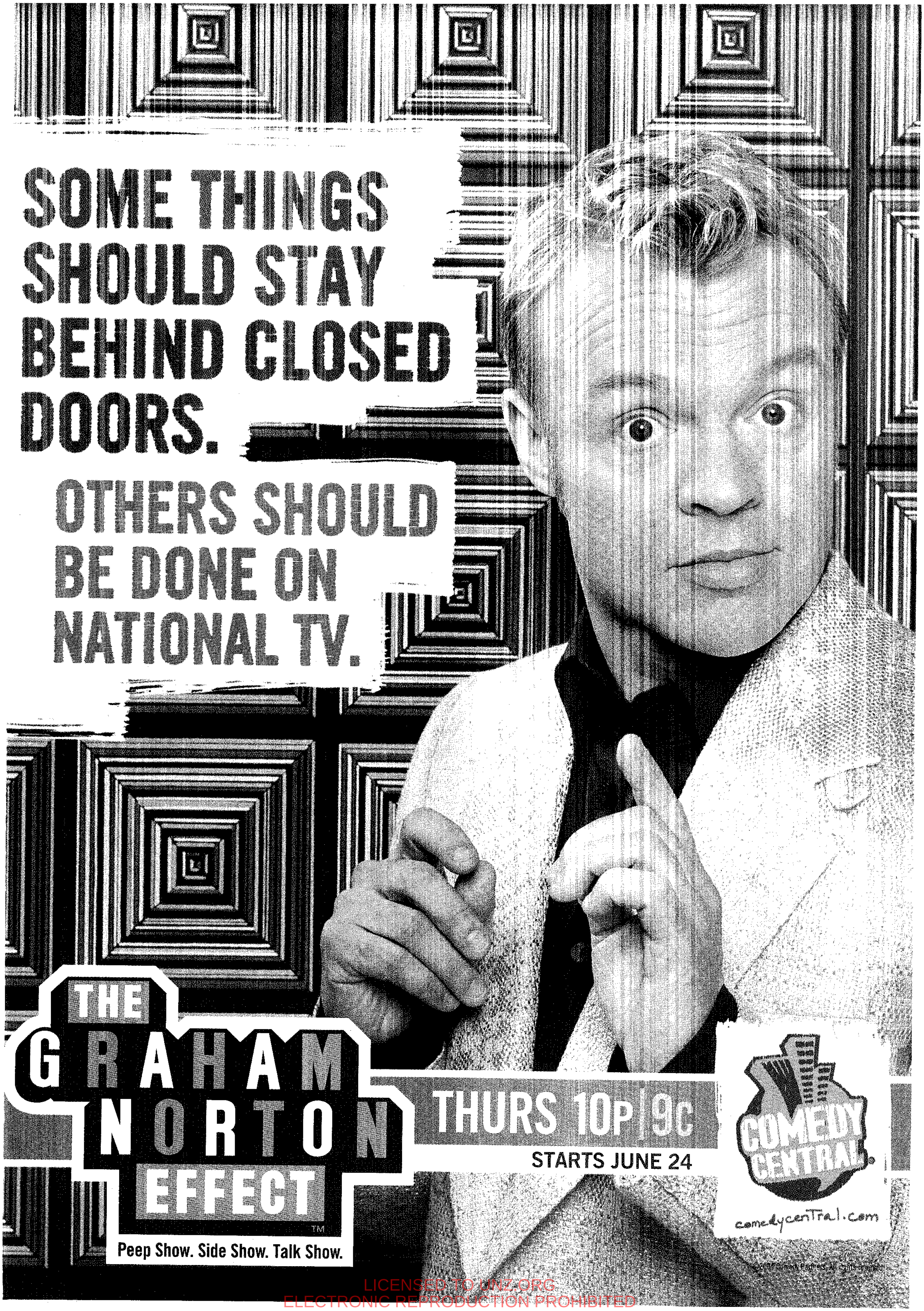
Fascinating and nauseating. As a life-style stunt, the documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock eats only at McDonald's for thirty days. It's not a happy set of meals: he puts on twenty pounds, develops heart palpitations, and is rendered impotent (much to the smirking dismay of his vegan girlfriend). While even "heavy users" of McDonald's don't eat fast food as often as Spurlock does during the experiment, he becomes an overweight case in point that Big Macs and their brethren have contributed to the supersizing of Americans. Even more worrying are Spurlock's forays into school cafeterias, which have become nutritional wastelands.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)

TROY

Adapting Homer's mighty Iliad into a two-and-a-half-hour spectacle, the writer David Benioff and the director Wolfgang Petersen compressed events, removed the mischievous gods, and turned the legends into a comprehensible political struggle. Agamemnon (Brian Cox), the chief of the Greek expedition, uses the loss of Helen to the Trojans as an excuse to conquer the eastern Aegean. The battles in front of the walls of Troy are cataclysmic and frightening, and the duels are fought out in the open, in clear space. You can tell, as at a championship boxing match, what's at stake in turning left rather than right, feinting rather than thrusting. Surrounded by an expert cast of international actors, Brad Pitt, as Achilles, tries and fails to speak in some classy mid-Atlantic accent, but he's fast as lightning in his movements. Eric Bana, as the Trojan Hector, is slower as a fighter, more dogged and earthbound, but he makes a fine reluctant warrior. The ladies do not distinguish themselves, and James Horner's music—wordless wailing women, hollow pounding drums—comes off as an ominous cliché. With Peter O'Toole as Priam and Orlando Bloom as Paris. Cinematography by Roger Pratt. Shot in Malta and Mexico.—*D.D.* (5/17/04) (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

VAN HELSING

One of the year's strongest contenders for a Complete Waste of Space. The omens were far from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grim; the writer and director, Stephen Sommers, proved himself capable of a certain retro cheerfulness with "The Mummy," and the star, Hugh Jackman, is by common consent the best thing in the "X-Men" franchise. Together, sadly, they have churned out a cacophonous mess, which not only aims squarely at teen-agers but itself seems painfully adolescent in its squirming refusal to decide what it wants. Thus, we get Count Dracula (Richard Roxburgh), who takes over from Dr. Frankenstein in the care and maintenance of monsters; we get a cameo from Mr. Hyde, doing a Quasimodo at the top of Notre-Dame; and we get Van Helsing himself (Jackman), who is employed by the Catholic Church to hunt down these unsociable creatures, presumably in the hope of reward in the world to come. One set piece follows howling on the heels of another, slowly draining all lifeblood from the claims of narrative logic. Of true and lingering horror there is no sign; if this is the cinema of homage, it's the kiss of death. With Kate Beckinsale as a vampire-hater of noble birth and David Wenham as a sexually active friar, plus the usual supporting cast of werewolves, underdressed throat biters, growling rustics, and so on. In English, just.—*A.L.* (5/24/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BUKOWSKI: BORN INTO THIS
Cinema Village.
HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN
Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
STRAYED
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema Classics, 332 E. 11th St. (212-677-6309).
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

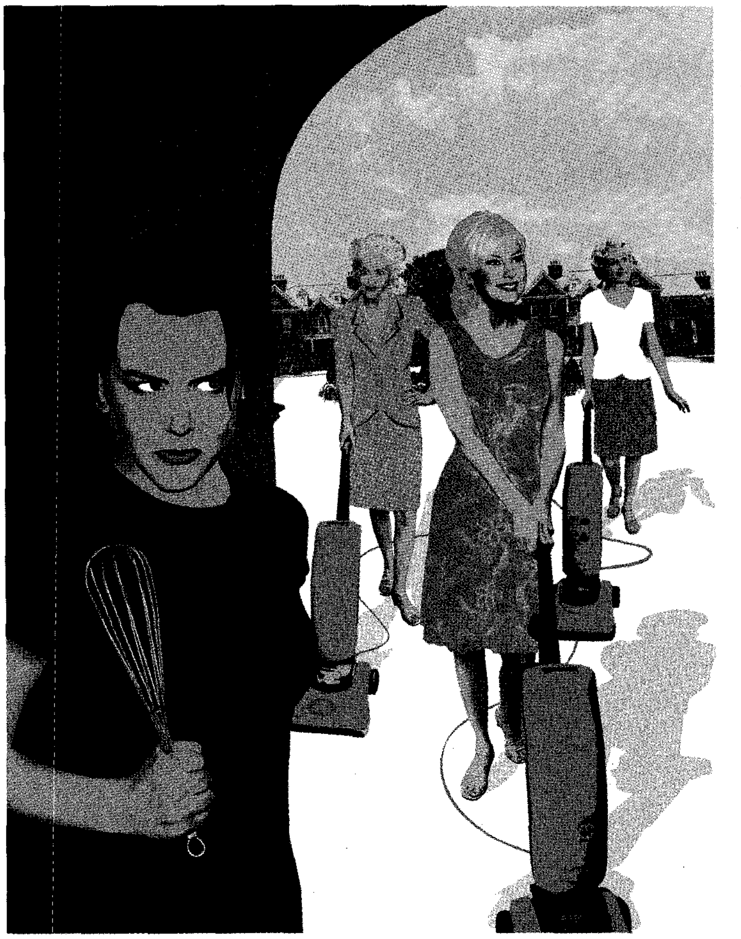
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—World-cinema Fridays. June 11 at 7:30: "A Cab for Three" (2001, Orlando Lübbert; in Spanish). ♦ June 18 at 7:30: "Anything Can Happen" (2003, Shashanka Ghosh; in Hindi). ♦ Through June 27: A Cary Grant retrospective. The first weekend features films directed by George Cukor; the second features films by Leo McCarey. June 12 at 2: "Sylvia Scarlet" (1935). ♦ June 12-13 at 4: "The Philadelphia Story" (1940). ♦ June 13 at 2: "Holiday" (1938). ♦ June 19 at 2: "The Awful Truth" (1937). ♦ June 19 at 4: "My Favorite Wife" (1940; completed by the director Garson Kanin). ♦ June 20 at 2: "Once Upon a Honeymoon" (†). ♦ June 20 at 4:15: "An Affair to Remember" (1957). ♦ Repertory nights. June 12-13 at 6:30: "Yojimbo" (1961, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ June 19-20 at 6:30: "Touchez Pas au Grisbi" (1954, Jacques Becker; in French).

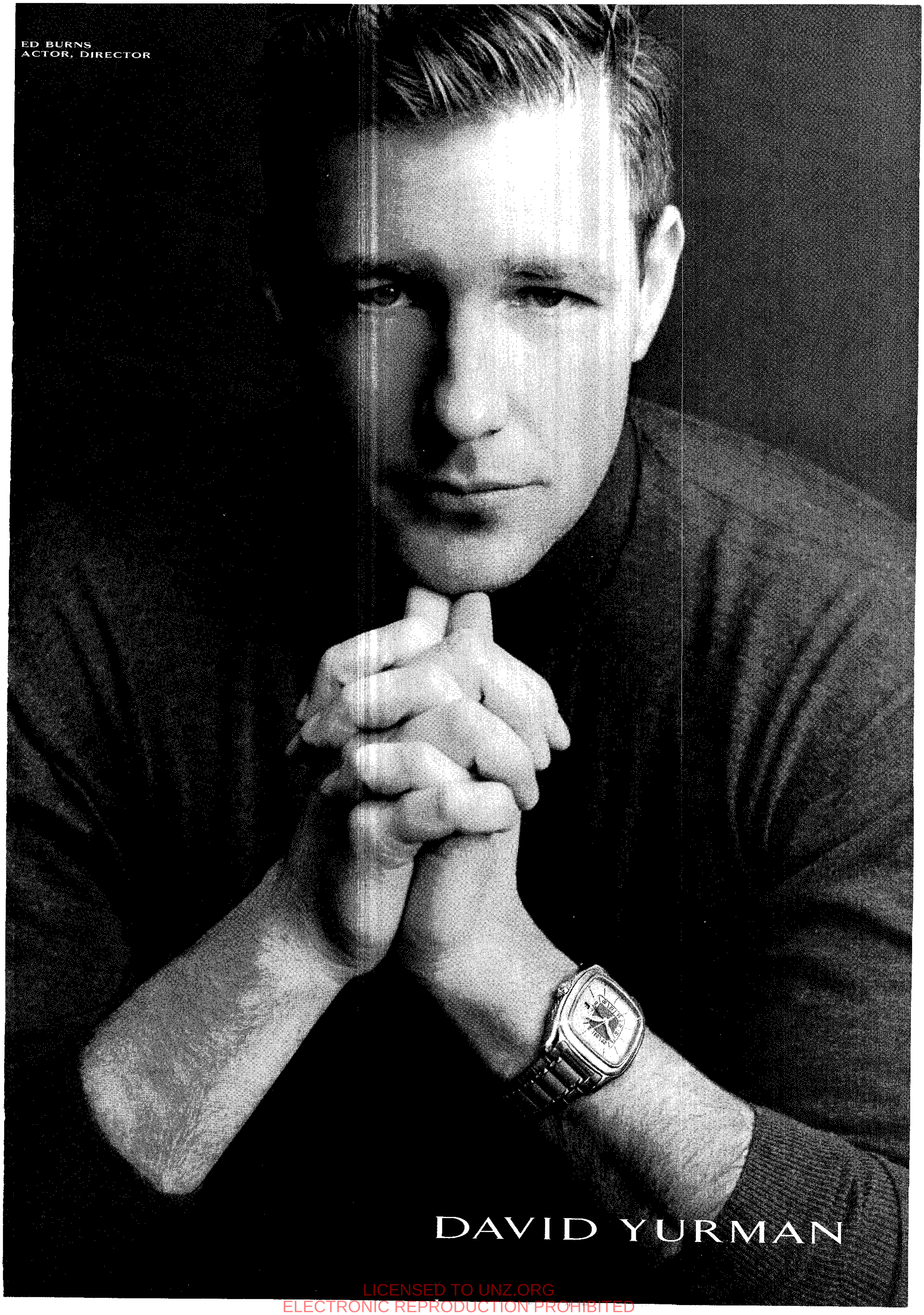
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Through June 13: A Peter Watkins retrospective. June 9 at 7: "Edvard Munch" (1976). ♦ June 10 at 7: "The Gladiators" (1969). ♦ June 10 at 9:30: "Privilege" (1967). ♦ June 11 at 7: "Punishment Park" (1971). ♦ June 11 at 9: "Evening Land" (1977). ♦ June 12 at 4: "The Universal Clock: The Resistance of Peter Watkins" (2001, Geoff Bowie). ♦ June 12 at 6: "The Freethinker" (1994). ♦ June 13 at 3: "La Commune (Paris, 1871): Part One" (2001). ♦ June 13 at 7:30: "La Commune (Paris, 1871): Part Two" (2001). ♦ Essential cinema. June 10 at 8: "Day of Wrath" (1943, Carl Th. Dreyer; in Danish, no subtitles). ♦ Through June 14: An Yvonne Rainer retrospective. June 11 at 7:30 and June 14 at 9:30: "Lives of Performers" (1972). ♦ June 11 at 9:30 and June 15 at 7: "Film About a Woman Who" (1974). ♦ June 12 at 5 and June 15 at 9:30: "Kristina Talking Pictures" (1976). ♦ June 12 and June 16 at 7: "Journeys from Berlin/1971" (1980). ♦ June 12 at 9:30: Short video works. ♦ June 13 at 4:30: A second program of short video works. ♦ June 13 at 7 and June 16 at 9:30: "The Man Who Envied Women" (†). ♦ June 13 at 9:30 and June 17 at 7: "Privilege" (1990). ♦ June 14 at 7: "Murder and Murder" (1996). ♦ The *Onion* film series. June 17 at 8: "Truck Turner" (1974, Jonathan Kaplan). ♦ Starting June 18: The New York Asian Film Festival 2004. June 18 at 6:15 and June 22 at 8:30: "Dance with the Wind" (2004, Jun-woo Park; in Korean). ♦ June 18 at 8:30: "Hero" (2002, Zhang Yimou; in Mandarin). ♦ June 18 at 10:30: "Legend of the Evil Lake" (2003, Lee Gwang-Hun; in Korean). ♦ June 19 at 2: "Zatoichi 3: New Tale of Zatoichi" (1963, Tokuzo Tanaka; in Japanese). ♦ June 19 at 4: "Antenna" (2003, Kazuyoshi Kumakiri; in Japanese). ♦ June 19 at 6:30: "Doppelganger" (2003, Kiyoshi Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ June 19 at 8:30: "Juon: The Grudge 1" (2003, Takashi Shimizu; in Japanese). ♦ June 19 at 10:30: "Juon: The Grudge 2" (2003, Shimizu; in Japanese). ♦ June 20 at 2: "Zatoichi 4: The Fugitive" (1963, Tanaka; in Japanese). ♦ June 20 at 4: "The Road Taken" (2003, Hong Gi-Seon; in Korean). ♦ June 20 at 8:30: "When the Last Sword Is Drawn" (2003, Yojiro Takita; in Japanese). ♦ June 21 at 6:30: "Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram" (2003, Manop Udomdej; in Thai). ♦ June 21 at 8:30: "Vibrator" (2003, Ryuichi Hiroki; in Japanese). ♦ June 22 at 6:30: "Drive" (2002, Sabu; in Japanese). ♦ Three films by the Russian director Alexander Sokurov. June 18 and June 21 at 7, June 19 at 5, and June 20 and June 22 at 9: "Mother and Son" (1997). ♦ June 18 and June 21 at 9, June 19 and June 22 at 7, and June 20 at 5: "Russian Ark" (2002). ♦ June 19 at 9 and June 20 at 7: "Second Circle" (1990).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Through June 30: The *Village Voice* film series. June 9 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The Man Without a Past" (2002, Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish). ♦ June 10 at 7:30: "Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary" (2002, Guy Maddin). ♦ June 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Gerry" (2002, Gus Van Sant). ♦ June 12-13 at 3, 6, and 9: "Blissfully Yours" (2002, Apichatpong Weerasethakul; in Thai). ♦ June 14 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "In My Skin" (2002, Marina de Van; in French). ♦ June 15 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Spellbound" (2002, Jeffrey Blitz). ♦ June 17 at 7:30: "A Talking Picture" (2003, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese, French, Italian, English, and Greek). ♦ June 18 at 3, 6, and 9: "Demonlover" (2002, Olivier Assayas; in English, French, and Japanese). ♦ June 19 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9:30: "Salt"



Nicole Kidman in "The Stepford Wives," opening June 11.

JOHN RITTER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(2003, Bradley Rust Gray). ♦ June 20 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Struggle" (2003, Ruth Mader; in German and Polish). ♦ June 22 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "In This World" (2002, Michael Winterbottom; in Pashtu, Persian, and English).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through July 1: An Ingmar Bergman retrospective. All films are in Swedish. June 9 at 1:10, 2:50, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:40: "Winter Light" (1963). ♦ June 10 at 1:35, 5:20, and 9:05: "Monika" (1953). ♦ June 10 at 3:30 and 7:15: "Summer Interlude" (1951). ♦ June 11-12 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Persona" (1966). ♦ June 13-14 at 1:15, 4, 7, and 9:40: "The Magic Flute" (1975). ♦ June 15 at 1:20, 3:25, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "Shame" (1968). ♦ June 16 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "The Silence" (1963). ♦ June 17 at 1:50, 5:25, and 9: "Port of Call" (1948). ♦ June 17 at 3:45 and 7:20: "Three Strange Loves" (1949). ♦ June 18-19 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:20, 8:10, and 10: "The Virgin Spring" (1960). ♦ June 20-21 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:40: "The Magician" (1958). ♦ June 22 at 2:15, 5:30, and 8:45: "The Ritual" (1969). ♦ June 22 at 3:45 and 7: "After the Rehearsal" (1984).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through June 22: "Nouveaux Cinéastes: New Filmmakers." June 15 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30 , and 9: "Ah! Si J'étais Riche" (2002, Michel Munz and Gérard Bitton; in French). ♦ June 22 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Bord de Mer" (2002, Julie Lopes-Curval; in French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. June 11-12: "Moulin Rouge" (2001, Baz Luhrmann). ♦ June 18-19: "The Breakfast Club" (1985, John Hughes).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—June 12-13 and June 19-20 at 1 and 6:30: "My Architect" (2003, Nathaniel Kahn). ♦ June 12-13 and June 19-20 at 3:30 and 9: "City of God" (2002, Fernando Meirelles; in Portuguese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through June 10: "Open Roads: New Italian Cinema." June 9 at 9: "Facing Windows" (2003, Ferzan Ozpetek). ♦ June 10 at 1: "The Place of the Soul" (2003, Riccardo Milani). ♦ June 10 at 3: "Now or Never" (2003, Lucio Pellegrini). ♦ Starting June 11: The Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 11 at 1, June 12 at 4, June 14 at 9, and June 17 at 1: "The Kite" (2003, Randa Chahal-Sabbag). ♦ June 11 at 3:30, June 12 at 1:30, and June 16 at 8:45: "Juvies" (2004, Leslie Neal). ♦ June 11 at 6:15, June 13 at 1:30, and June 16 at 1: "Persons of Interest" (2003, Alison Maclean and Tobias Perse). ♦ June 11 at 8:30: "What the Eye Doesn't See" (2003, Francisco J. Lombardi). ♦ June 12 at 6:30, June 15 at 3, and June 21 at 8:45: "Deadline" (2003, Katy Chevigny and Kirsten Johnson). ♦ June 12 at 9:15 and June 14 at 1:30: "Saints and Sinners" (2004, Abigail Honor and Yan Vizinberg). ♦ June 13 at 4: "The Corporation" (2003, Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott). ♦ June 13 at 8, June 14 at 6:30, and June 15 at 1: "Born Into Brothels" (2003, Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman). ♦ June 14 at 4, June 16 at 6:30, and June 17 at 9:15: "Paradise Lost" (2003, Ebitsam Mra'ana). ♦ June 16 at 3:30 and June 17 at 6:30: "Leila" (1999, Dariush Mehrjui). ♦ June 17 at 3:30 and June 18 at 9:15: "Goodbye Hungaria" (2003, Jon Nealon). ♦ June 18 at 1:30 and 6:30, June 19 at 10, and June 20 at 9:15: "One Shot" (2004, Nurit Kedar). ♦ June 18 at 3:30, June 19 at 4:30, and June 20 at 6:30: "The World Stopped Watching" (2003, Peter Raymont and Harold Crooks). ♦ June 19 and June 21 at 1 and June 22 at 8: "Repatriation" (2003, Dong-won Kim). ♦ June 19 at 7:30, June 20 at 4, and June 22 at 1: "Liberia: An Uncivil War" (2004, Jonathan Stack). ♦ June 20 at 1, June 21 at 6:30, and June 22 at 3:30: "Discordia" (2004, Ben Addelman and Samir Mallal). ♦ June 21 at 4:30 and June 22 at 6:15: "For a Place Under the Heavens" (2003, Sabiha Sumar). ♦ June 24 at 7: "The Yes Men" (2003, Dan Ollman, Sarah Price, and Chris Smith).

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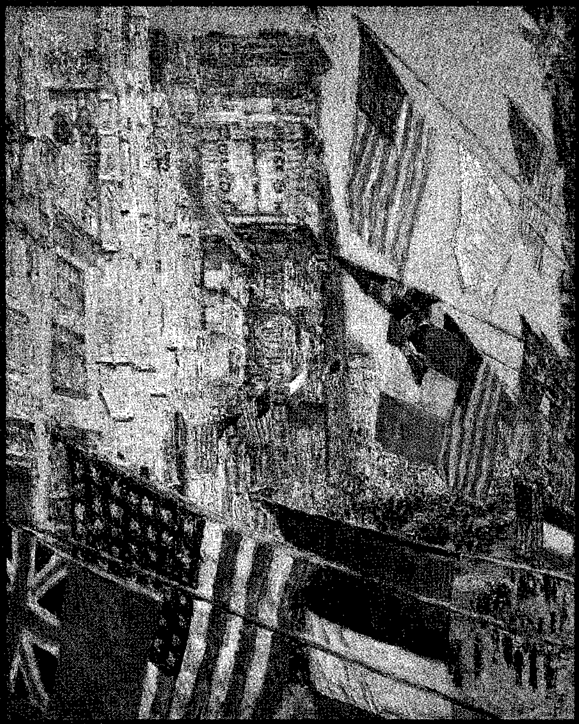

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

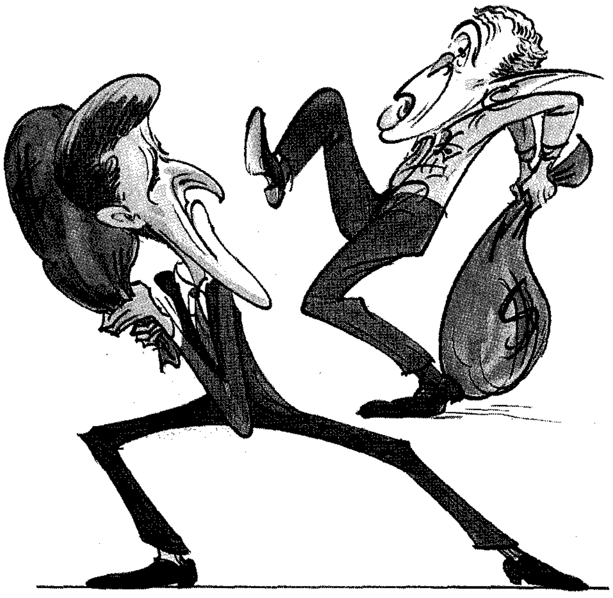
One of the sillier interludes of the current campaign season—or seasons, since the damn thing is going to end up spreading across all four by the time it gets through with us—was the mini-flap over when John Kerry would "accept" the Democratic nomination for President. The flap began on Friday, May 21st, when the Associated Press moved a story saying that the Kerry campaign was considering having its candidate delay his "acceptance" until September 1st, the day before President Bush "accepts" his renomination as the Republican candidate, at his party's Convention, here in New York. The Democratic Convention would still come off as scheduled, in Boston, during the last week in July, and there would still be nominating speeches and floor demonstrations and funny hats, and Senator Kerry would still deliver the traditional climactic address. But, in some formal, technical, strictly legal sense, the nomination would just sort of sit there for the next five weeks, at which point, in some similarly formal, technical, strictly legal sense, Kerry would "accept" it—perhaps by telephone. Or maybe via e-mail.

The reason that the idea of this Kabuki dance was entertained is an anomaly in the otherwise excellent public-finance provision of the Presidential Election Campaign Fund Act, under which each of the major candidates for President is given a check, financed by citizens who have ticked off boxes on their income-tax returns, with which to conduct his general-election campaign. This year, the checks will be for a tad under seventy-five million dollars apiece—$74.69 million, to be exact. Each candidate gets his check either on September 1st or when he accepts his party's nomination, whichever comes first. After that, that's it—he can no longer raise or spend any other money.

The result, this year, will be a significant advantage for Bush. His public money has to last him for only sixty-three days, so he can spend it at an average daily rate of $1.2 million. Kerry, on the other hand, has to make his last for ninety-six days, so he'll be able to spend only around $800,000 a day. To make matters worse for Kerry, all through August he will be hoarding his skinny federal wad for later use, while Bush can go on raising and spending unlimited piles of private cash. When you consider that during March, eight months before the election, the Bush campaign spent fifty million dollars, or $1.6 million a day, on television ads alone—well, you can see why Kerry might be a little concerned.

The Kerry people say they didn't put forth the delay-the-acceptance idea as a trial balloon; it leaked out the old-fashioned way, by accident. Whatever kind of balloon it was, though, it turned to lead before it got airborne. It came under immediate and sustained attack on the weekend political chat shows. "What's going on is money, money, money," the dean of Washington political reporters, David S. Broder, of the Washington *Post*, said on "Meet the Press." "I have to say that we used to blame Republicans as being the party where money really drove everything. It's the Democrats that are allowing money to drive everything."

That was a little harsh, given that, as of the day Broder spoke, the Bush campaign had raised some $201 million (versus Kerry's



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE

$117 million), given that three-fifths of Bush's money comes from big donors who "max out" at two thousand dollars (versus two-fifths of Kerry's), and given how closely the fiscal, environmental, and labor policies of the Bush Administration track with the pecuniary interests of those big donors. The entire episode may indeed demonstrate the degree to which money drives modern Presidential politics. But it also demonstrates the degree to which mindlessness drives the coverage of modern Presidential politics.

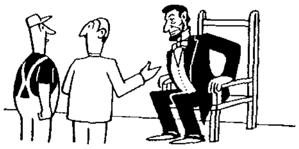
In any common-sense meaning of the word, after all, both Kerry and Bush have already accepted the nominations of their respective parties. That's why they're spending tens of millions to promote themselves and their candidacies. All that the Kerry people were proposing to do, really, was to use one arbitrary technicality to correct another arbitrary technicality—a technicality that, uncorrected, creates a gross and obvious unfairness. Is that so terrible? Apparently the media *thought* so, judging from their behavior during the five days the idea was on the table. That behavior was divided about equally between gleeful ridicule and insistence that the delay would be seen as a "metaphor"—not for resourcefulness or daring but for flip-floppery. "John Kerry's idea of rigging his nomination for financial gain looks too clever by half—especially for a politician with a troublesome reputation for trying to have it both ways," John Harwood wrote, in the *Wall Street Journal*. "We do look forward to his nonacceptance speech," a Washington *Post* editorial jeered. On top of that, there were hints that the networks might seize on the technicality as an excuse to cut back on their coverage of the Democratic Convention, which, like the Republican Convention, is a money-loser for them. More than hints, actually. Tom Brokaw, the NBC News anchor, went on CNN's "Larry King Live" and said, "My personal belief is that if he"—Kerry—"announces he will not accept the nomination, that there's no good reason for NBC, the network, to be in Boston covering the Convention." Kerry needed the money that delay would have brought him, but he needed it less than he didn't need the aggravation. And so, on Wednesday, May 26th, he dropped the whole idea.

It's only fair to note that the Democrats got themselves into this fix by scheduling their Convention so early. They assumed that their candidate, post-primaries, would be flat broke, and that the sooner he got his hands on the federal money the better. As it has turned out, Kerry has enjoyed unprecedented fund-raising success, mainly because so many ordinary Democrats are willing to do practically anything, even write a check, to get rid of Bush. The President will still outspend Kerry by something in the neighborhood of two to one, which may or may not be enough. Republicans will probably always have more money than Democrats, no matter how many reforms are introduced into the system, because Republican policies (in general, broadly speaking, with exceptions and caveats) favor large agglomerations of money. Democratic policies (in general, broadly speaking, with exceptions and caveats) favor large agglomerations of people. That's why Democrats, though they have fewer dollars, are sometimes able to get more people to vote for them, and sometimes (the last Presidential election being a conspicuous exception) getting more votes enables you to win. Dollars don't always trump people. That's the beauty of democracy, when it works.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

EUREKA DEPT.

THE SUICIDE POEM



On August 25, 1838, the *Sangamo Journal*, a four-page Whig newspaper in Springfield, Illinois, carried its usual mixture of ads, news, and editorials. Wallace & Diller's Drug and Chemical Store had just received a fresh supply of sperm oil, fishing rods, and French cologne. L. Higby, the town collector, gave notice that all citizens must pay their street tax or face "trouble." Atop the news page, the paper carried an unsigned poem, thirty-six lines long. The poem, which is typical of the era, in its sentiment and morbidness, stands out now for two reasons: first, its subject is suicide (the title of the poem is "The Suicide's Soliloquy"); second, its author was most likely a twenty-nine-year-old politician and lawyer named Abraham Lincoln.

The reputed existence of a "suicide poem" has lurked in the background of Lincoln scholarship since shortly after the President's death, in 1865, when his close friend Joshua Speed mentioned it to Lincoln's law partner and biographer William Herndon. At least twice, at the ages of twenty-six and thirty-one, Lincoln had expressed thoughts of suicide seriously enough to alarm his friends. Speed was certain that Lincoln had published the poem in the *Journal*, but he wasn't sure about the date. It might have been 1840 or 1841 or—Speed said finally—1838. Yet two early biographies based on Herndon's research dated the missing poem to the summer of 1841. They assumed it had followed Lincoln's second suicidal breakdown, known to historians as the "fatal first of January."

For more than a century, then, scholars have been looking for the poem in the wrong place. And the man who wound up finding it wasn't looking for it at all. Since 1990, Richard Lawrence Miller, an independent scholar who supports himself by painting houses, answering phones, and dog sitting, has been at work on a multivolume biography of Lincoln's life in Illinois. He has combed through eleven years' worth of *Sangamo Journals*. He first came upon "The Suicide's Soliloquy" several years ago. He says that he thought, "Isn't this interesting? It's the same topic that Lincoln wrote a poem about." Miller photocopied the poem, and moved on.

In the fall of 2002, however, he happened across Speed's reference to 1838. "I thought, Wait a minute. That's long before the 'fatal first' episode," Miller said the other day, from his home in Kansas City.

Miller went back and studied "The Suicide's Soliloquy." He found that it has the same meter as Lincoln's other published verse, with characteristic references, syntax, diction, and tone. It fit the date given by Speed. Announcing the find in the spring, 2004, newsletter of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Miller wrote, "We might be justified in wondering if the mystery of Lincoln's 'suicide' poem may now be solved."

Though this news was delivered with

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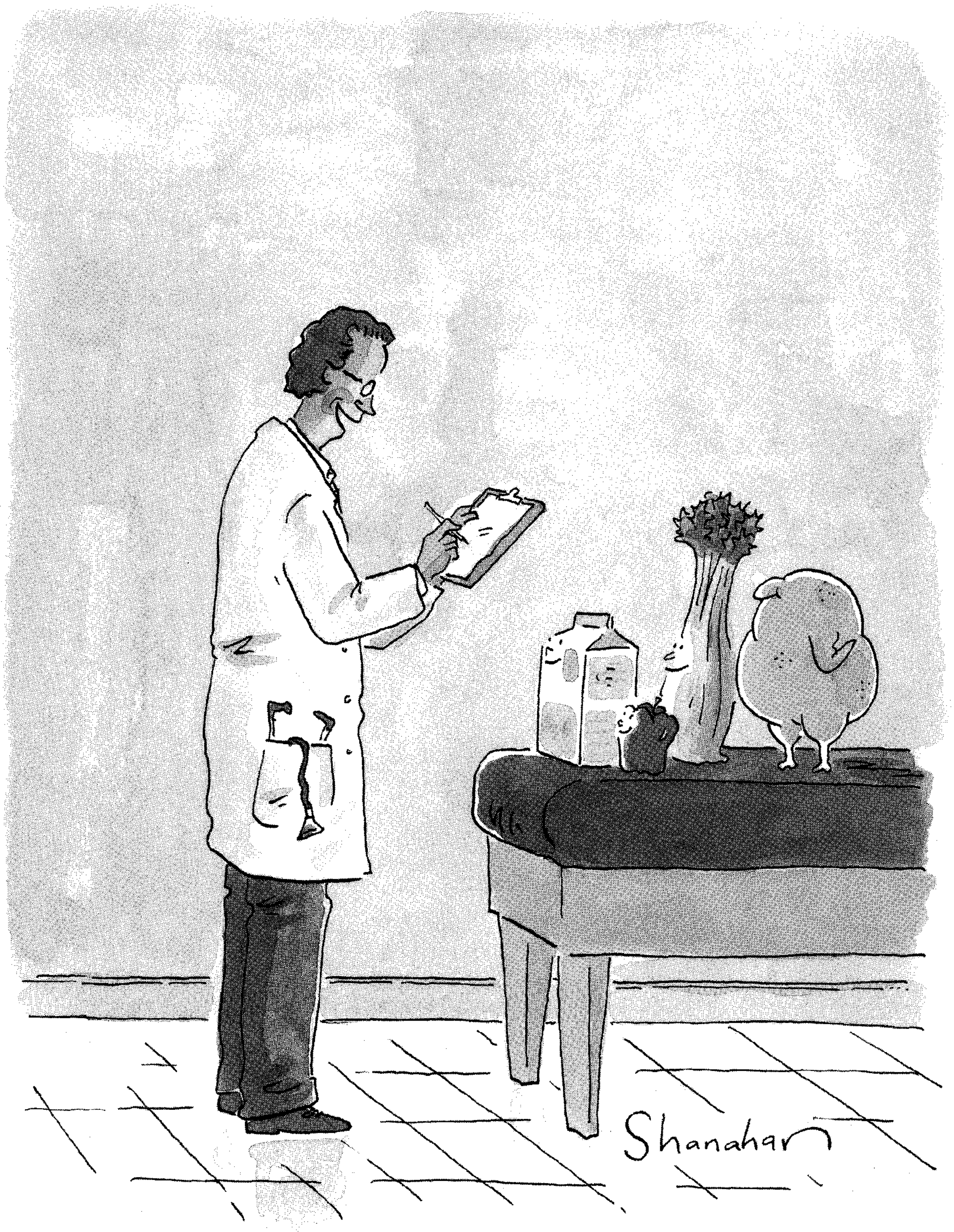

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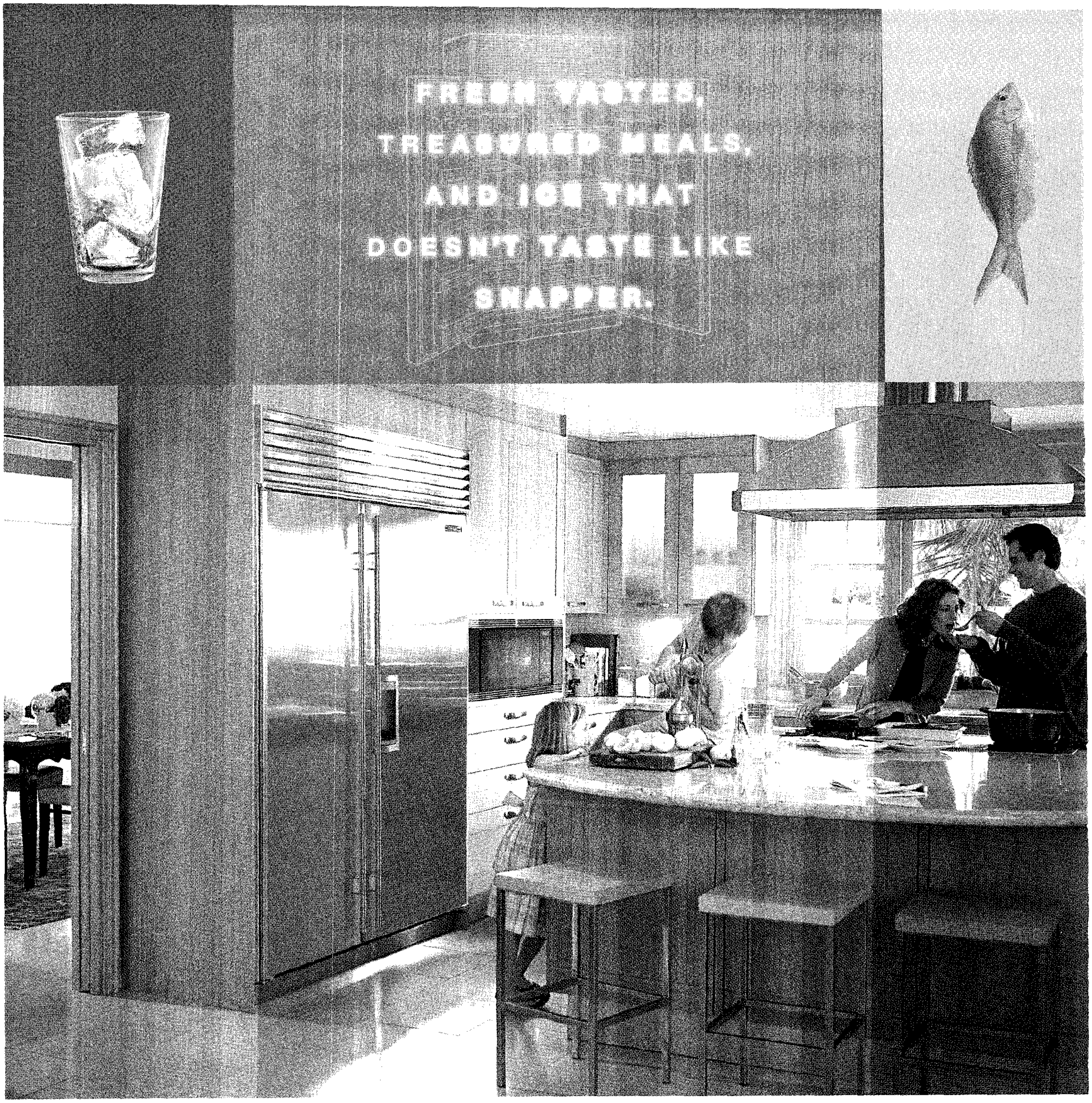
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academic equanimity, many Lincoln scholars believe that the poem is indeed the real thing. "It looks like Lincoln. It sounds like Lincoln. It probably is Lincoln," Harold Holzer, the co-chairman of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, said last week. "I don't have many doubts that Lincoln wrote this," Douglas Wilson, the author of "Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln," said.

Given the contentious, exhaustive nature of Lincoln studies, it's hardly surprising that not everyone is convinced. "He very probably did write about suicide at some point," David Herbert Donald, a professor emeritus of history at Harvard and the author of numerous books on Lincoln, said. "But I'm not ready to attribute this specific poem to him."

The poem is written in the voice of a tortured, lonely soul who comes to the bank of the Sangamon River:

Yes! I've resolved the deed to do,
 And this the place to do it:
This heart I'll rush a dagger through
 Though I in hell should rue it!

Even if one takes into account the appetite for melodrama in Lincoln's day, the last two stanzas of the poem are startling:

Sweet steel! Come forth from out
  your sheath,
 And glist'ning, speak your powers;
Rip up the organs of my breath,
 And draw my blood in showers!

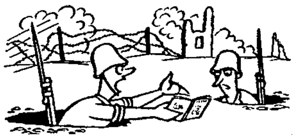
I strike! It quivers in that heart
 Which drives me to this end;
I draw and kiss the bloody dart,
 My last—my only friend!

"I think the poem will tell us something about Lincoln, but the question is, What?" Wilson said. "It recalls Eliot's idea that every new work affects the whole order. This poem is like a new chair in the room. Once you get the poem in the room, you have to rearrange all the other furniture."

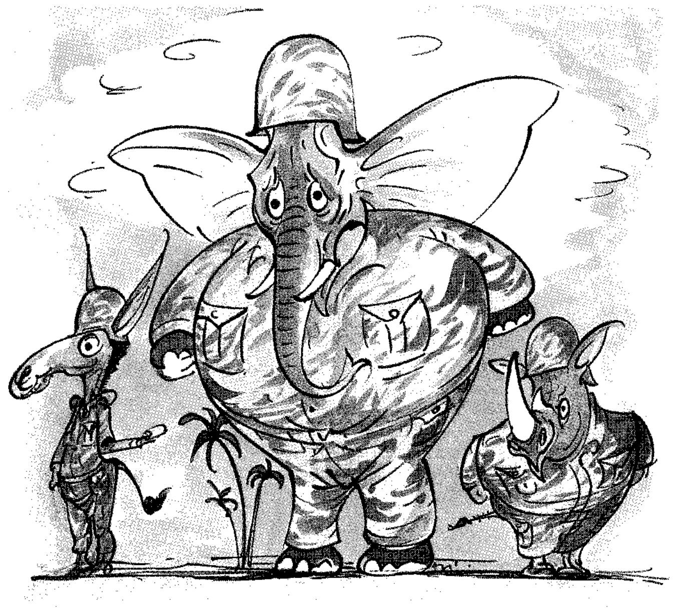
"It's like finding an unknown Vermeer," Holzer said. "Or it's like finding the little Michelangelo statue in the French consulate. Nobody ever suggested that it's the true flower of his genius. It's basically a student piece. But, still, there it is."

—*Joshua Wolf Shenk*

THE ABSENTEE BALLOT
A DEMOCRATIC IRAQ?



In late April, a group of Americans serving in Iraq sent a letter to John Kerry, appealing to the candidate as both an ex-soldier and a peace seeker. It read, in part, "Put bluntly: we believe you need to get over here, suck in some sand and sweat a bit in the desert heat while talking to, among others, U.S. soldiers, Iraqi technocrats, Coalition officials, private sector reconstruction contractors, and tribal leaders. Perhaps only then will you begin to get a real sense of the real Iraq, for Iraq cannot be understood from the halls of Washington or via briefing papers alone." The letter concluded, "As our next Commander-in-Chief, the sooner you get over here, the better," and it was signed, "Donkeys in the Desert."



The Donkeys in the Desert are a small but increasingly vocal minority of Democrats working under the auspices of the Coalition Provisional Authority. They now number about two dozen, up from an original eight, last fall, and most of them are based in Baghdad, although satellite members can be found on the front lines in places like Baqubah and Ramadi. Roughly a third of the Donkeys are soldiers (from sergeants to colonels), and the rest are civilians working in various C.P.A. divisions—force protection, trade, foreign affairs—through private contractors or assorted government agencies. The group meets weekly, on Monday nights at eight o'clock, at an old Republican Guard swimming pool within Baghdad's comfort area, the Green Zone. They eat pizza, drink beer, and discuss voter education and outreach.

Kael Weston, a State Department adviser in Baghdad, is the founder of Donkeys in the Desert. He recently returned to the United States for a three-week break, before another planned stint abroad, possibly in Falluja, and on Memorial Day he stepped briefly out of the midtown drizzle to grab a cup of coffee. "I kind of like the rain," he said. "I wish it would rain more over there, in the desert."

Weston, who is in his early thirties, and whose father, uncle, brother-in-law, and grandfather are all veterans, has served eight months in Baghdad, working mostly with trucking unions—"like the Teamsters of Iraq," he said. "I've kind of become the Jimmy Hoffa of the C.P.A." He had never been a political organizer before his Iraq experience. "This has been my first political action," he said of organizing the Donkeys. "In that environment, it forces you to think more deeply about why you are where you are."

There is no shortage of politicization within Coalition circles in Iraq, to be sure. In the middle of the marble palace that serves as C.P.A. headquarters (and that will serve, at least temporarily, as part of the U.S. Embassy, beginning next month), there is a painting of the World Trade Center towers—whose relevance to Operation Iraqi Freedom remains a matter of bitter contention. Stratcom, the Coalition press office, is staffed by a number of former Bush campaign workers. One Donkey reports chafing at a colleague's remark, "I'm not here for the Iraqis, I'm here for George W. Bush."

"A lot of Republicans walk around talking Republican stuff," Weston said.

"We call them Palace Pachyderms."

The Donkeys kept a low profile last fall and winter, during primary season, but lately, as the violence has increased, and as morale has sunk, the group has been emboldened, advertising its meetings with flyers taped up around the palace. In recent weeks, several of the flyers have been torn down or defaced—in one instance, with a derogatory reference to Al Gore. Continued bombings, meanwhile, have made the meetings' prime attraction—good grub—harder to come by; the group's pizzeria of choice is an Iraqi-owned establishment situated in the treacherous Red Zone.

In addition to the Kerry letter (to which the candidate has not yet responded), the group also published a mission statement, of sorts, in the *Overseas Democrat*, the newsletter of Democrats Abroad, an official Party organization representing some six million American expatriates. (A supporter from the South of France e-mailed Weston, "We love your name and hope the donkeys will be out of the desert and into the White House A.S.A.P.")

"There's a misperception that if you're in the military you're going to vote Republican," Weston went on. "But in the Army there are a lot of RINOS: Republicans in Name Only. I think there's frustration from a lot of reservists, whose terms of service keep being extended." (One reservist, Specialist Kevin Fisher, a New Yorker stationed in Baqubah with the 415th Civil Affairs Battalion, e-mailed last week to express his frustration with, among other things, the adoption of the term A.I.F., for Anti-Iraqi Forces: "Kind of a funny term in my opinion since I would guess that they are increasingly made up of Iraqis who have grown tired of the Americans being in their country.") It is from the ranks of these reservists that the Donkeys hope to recruit many new members.

Political leanings within the Donkeys range from "very left" to ex-RINO, but a hasty retreat from Iraq does not fall within the group's agenda. "I think we're pretty happy that Kerry has at least demonstrated that it is a complicated situation in Iraq, and not just a case of 'Get out tomorrow,'" Weston said.

—*Ben McGrath*

YOU LOOK MARVELLOUS DEPT.
THE NEW PORTRAIT

Those who bemoan the navel-gazing tendencies of contemporary art will be relieved to know that in some precincts the forces that shaped Velázquez, Gainsborough, and Sargent—patronage and vanity—still drive innovations in the market. Several months ago, Harry Stendhal, who with his sister owns Maya Stendhal Gallery, in Chelsea, commissioned a painter and filmmaker named Jeffrey Scher to do a portrait of his friend Susan Shin, whom Stendhal described on a Web site that he set up for her as "an icon of the times." Shin, who works as an intellectual-property lawyer by day (Goodwin Procter) and as a committeewoman by night (The Young Friends of Save Venice, the Central Park Conservancy, New Yorkers for Children), is, Stendhal wrote, "generous with her resources—and, believe me, she has endless resources for the good of many charitable causes." She is, furthermore, "glamorous and much sought after in New York, London, Paris, you name it." In other words, she seemed to him the perfect candidate to inaugurate what he sees as the new age of society portraiture: the short animated film.

Scher's two-minute film, which Stendhal gave Shin as a gift, shows a flatteringly cartooned shoulders-up Shin doing very little as her luxurious black hair strobes from tangerine to lilac to rainbow and eventually back to black, and a small smile flickers across her bright-red lips. A jaunty nineteen-forties guitar-and-accordion piece plays in the background. "It's become too boring to look at a regular photo of any kind," said Stendhal, who has the portrait on display in his gallery. "This is an art version that's idealized. It hides away any imperfections, of course."

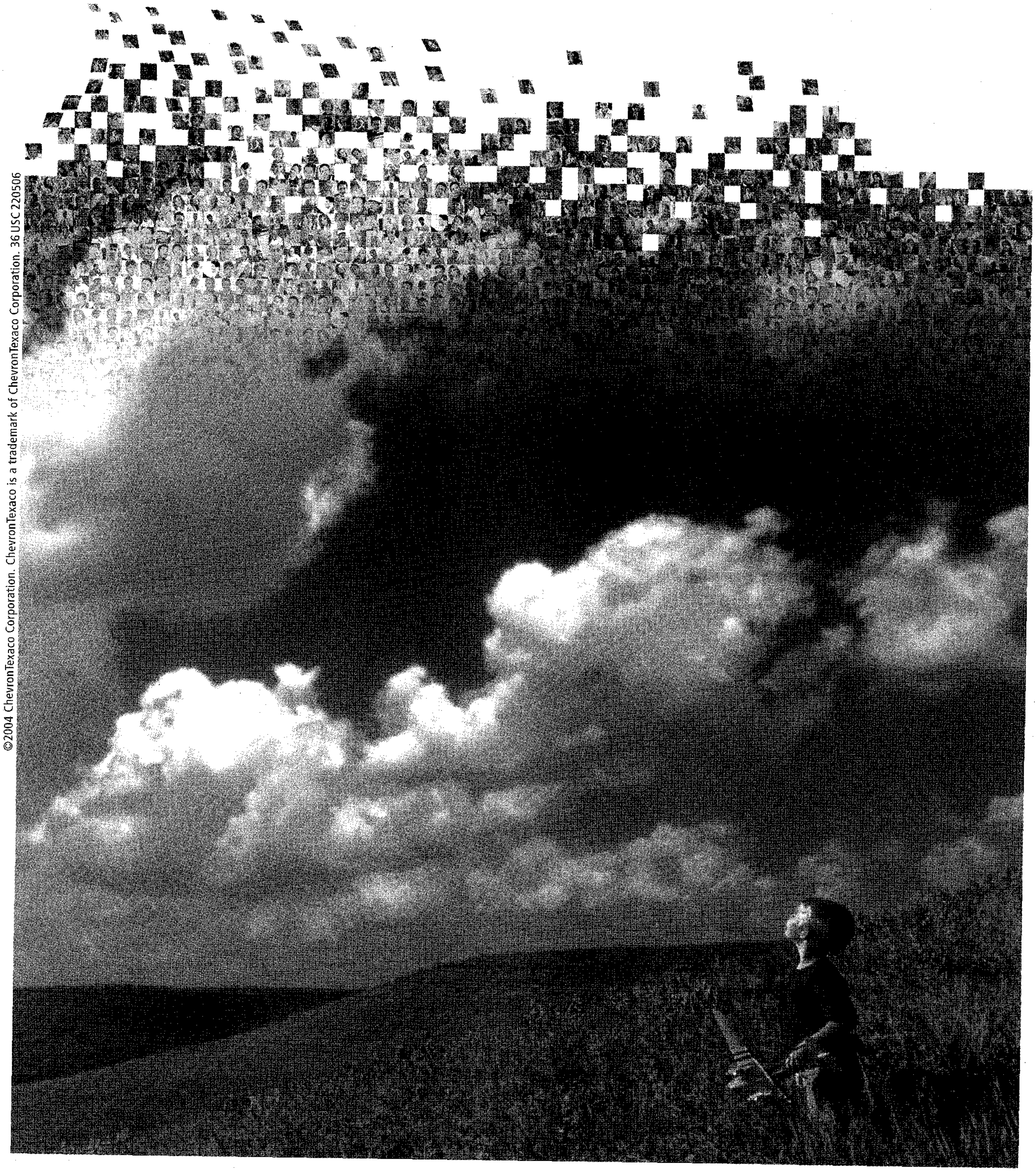
To make the portrait, Scher filmed Shin in kind light; projected the film frame by frame through a rotoscope onto paper; and painted hundreds of six-by-seven-inch editions of her in watercolor, gouache, marker, pencil, and crayon, each one different. Then he loaded the pictures onto an animation stand and filmed them individually, before converting the whole thing to digital video. The process is about "distillation," Scher notes. "What you don't paint is as important as what you do."

An astute salesman, Stendhal held an unveiling party at the gallery on Shin's thirty-seventh birthday, last month (the theme was "Birth of a Goddess," and the crowd of five hundred, Scher said tentatively, was "Patrick McMullan"). A number of guests left coveting a portrait of their own—bankers wanting pictures of their wives, wives wanting pictures of themselves. "A few of them are just civilians, New York people," Stendhal said, and went on to mention actors, rock stars, a fashion designer, and several socialites, whose interest he is monitoring carefully. The portraits, including the paintings that constitute the frames, cost twenty-five thousand dollars. "People are getting on the wait list," Stendhal continued. "Jeff can also do people playing golf, or at the beach, wherever they look their best."

The other day, Stendhal sat in the gallery watching Shin on a continuous loop with a trilogy of Scher's animated films—"Reasons to Be Glad" (composed of two thousand paintings), "Milk of Amnesia" (three thousand), and "Garden of Regrets" (ten thousand)—that is in the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art. Beautifully rendered images of couples kissing, a toreador, a gondolier, trapeze artists, divers, children rolling down a hill, a lady eating a drumstick while twirling around in her underwear, two slim fellows in a fistfight, and the smoldering ruins of a house flashed by in a palette from a box of Caran d'Ache *cray pas*. The paintings of Shin hung on the wall. (Paintings from Scher's animated shorts cost between five hundred and fifteen hundred dollars each, depending on the vintage, and scenes must be bought complete.)

Shin studied art history at Columbia, and is well positioned to appreciate Scher's work. "I actually wrote a thesis about the history of portraiture," she said last week. "Who could afford them, how they were commissioned, and how you had a certain station in life and you wanted to represent that." In a few weeks, when Shin takes her portrait home, she'll be faced with a conundrum: how to display it. "I have a flat-screen, but that's kind of narcissistic," she said. "Maybe for parties."

—*Dana Goodyear*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
PERK HOGS

In the 1957 comedy "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" the late Tony Randall played an adman yearning to ascend the corporate ladder. Rock Hunter wants more authority and a higher salary, of course, but he's really after something more tangible: the key to the executive washroom. It is finally bestowed on him with all the pomp of a coronation, and as he catches his first glimpse of the inner sanctum he exclaims, "Oh, the beauty of it all!"

The perks have changed since then—the washroom now comes with a Gulfstream V—but the zeal with which executives cling to them has not. At most large American companies, rank still has its privileges; the big shots need not trouble themselves with paying for the things that their immense salaries are supposed to enable them to afford. Park Avenue duplexes, burglar alarms, floral arrangements, a lifetime of all-you-can-eat at Jean Georges: it's good to be the king. Though some of the more flagrant perk abusers, such as Dennis Kozlowski, of Tyco, have been in trouble recently, the appetite for fringe benefits has not diminished. Now that companies are lavishing free stuff on C.E.O.s even after they retire, one can only assume that, as soon as it becomes possible, enterprising executives will be locking up perks in the afterlife.

Twenty years ago, perks seemed to be going the way of three-Martini lunches and three-piece suits. In the seventies and eighties, as the old-line American corporate giants floundered in the face of competition from Japan, Germany, and Silicon Valley, an assemblage of economists, big investors, and takeover artists sparked a backlash against pampered chief executives. The model perk hog was Ross Johnson, the C.E.O. of RJR Nabisco, who once sent a company jet to fetch his dog Rocco from Palm Springs, listing him on the manifest as G. Shepherd. (Johnson belonged to twenty-four country clubs, all of them paid for by his shareholders.) Everyone—at least, everyone outside the executive suite—seemed to agree that corporate America was due for a dose of market medicine. Perks did not fit into the notion that pay should reflect an executive's performance, not his station. As the economists Michael Jensen and Kevin Murphy put it, C.E.O.s needed to act less like bureaucrats and more like entrepreneurs. They'd have the chance to get richer than ever, but only if they made shareholders rich, too.

Along the way, the plan changed. Pay did grow, as companies learned to use stock options to boost bonuses, but so did the taste for perks. In the fifties, companies had relied on country-club memberships and vast corner offices to make up for the relatively low salaries they were paying their executives, in part because high income taxes made big paychecks impractical. So maybe you got a car instead of a raise. These days, though, you get the car and the raise, plus the company pays your taxes, your dry-cleaning bills, and your kids' tuition.

In a world where multimillion-dollar salaries are commonplace, it may seem trivial to take issue with free dry cleaning, but the fact is that perks do count. They're the best symbol of the way in which executives continue to enrich themselves at shareholders' expense. They're a classic example of pay without performance—a bad year of sales isn't likely to lead to an eviction from the country club. More important, there is substantial evidence that perks hurt a company's bottom line. David Yermack, an economist at N.Y.U. who specializes in executive compensation, looked at the performance of more than two hundred big American companies between 1993 and 2002, comparing those which allowed their C.E.O.s to use company jets for personal purposes with those which did not. Even after accounting for a host of other factors, Yermack found that the long-term stock-market performance of perk-rich companies was dramatically worse than that of their peers, costing shareholders hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

The problem is not the cost of the perks themselves; at a ten-billion-dollar corporation, they're hardly even a rounding error. It's what they are symptomatic of. Perks and rigid management hierarchies tend to go together; perks are designed in part to reinforce status divisions, and rigid hierarchies do not lend themselves to intelligent decision-making, since they isolate executives from the rest of the company. Also, C.E.O.s who indulge in perks are likely to be profligate in general with shareholder money. Executives in a perk-rich environment get used to living on the company's dime, and let's face it: when the company is paying, price is no object. (Consider the inflated prices at restaurants in most urban business districts; expense-account heedlessness powers a mini-economy of its own.) That kind of waste may spill over into corporate decisions. Recently, some economists have tried to argue that perks make executives more productive—eighteen holes at Winged Foot can sure clear the mind—but Yermack found that their negative impact was undeniable: employees at perk-rich companies have a much lower rate of sales; they're less, not more, efficient than their peers.

Why do perks endure? In part, it's because, despite all the conferences and manifestos and reorganization charts, plenty of American businesses are still run as they were in the fifties. The retrogrades tend to be bigger and older, and to be in industries that don't change much from year to year (such as oil, chemicals, and food), and they are the ones that go overboard on perks. Younger, more innovative companies avoid them—compared with the Old Guard, Silicon Valley is Sparta. But it's largely because most C.E.O.s will take whatever they can get. It is hard for them to say no when their boards of directors keep saying yes. That, for them, is the beauty of it all.

—*James Surowiecki*

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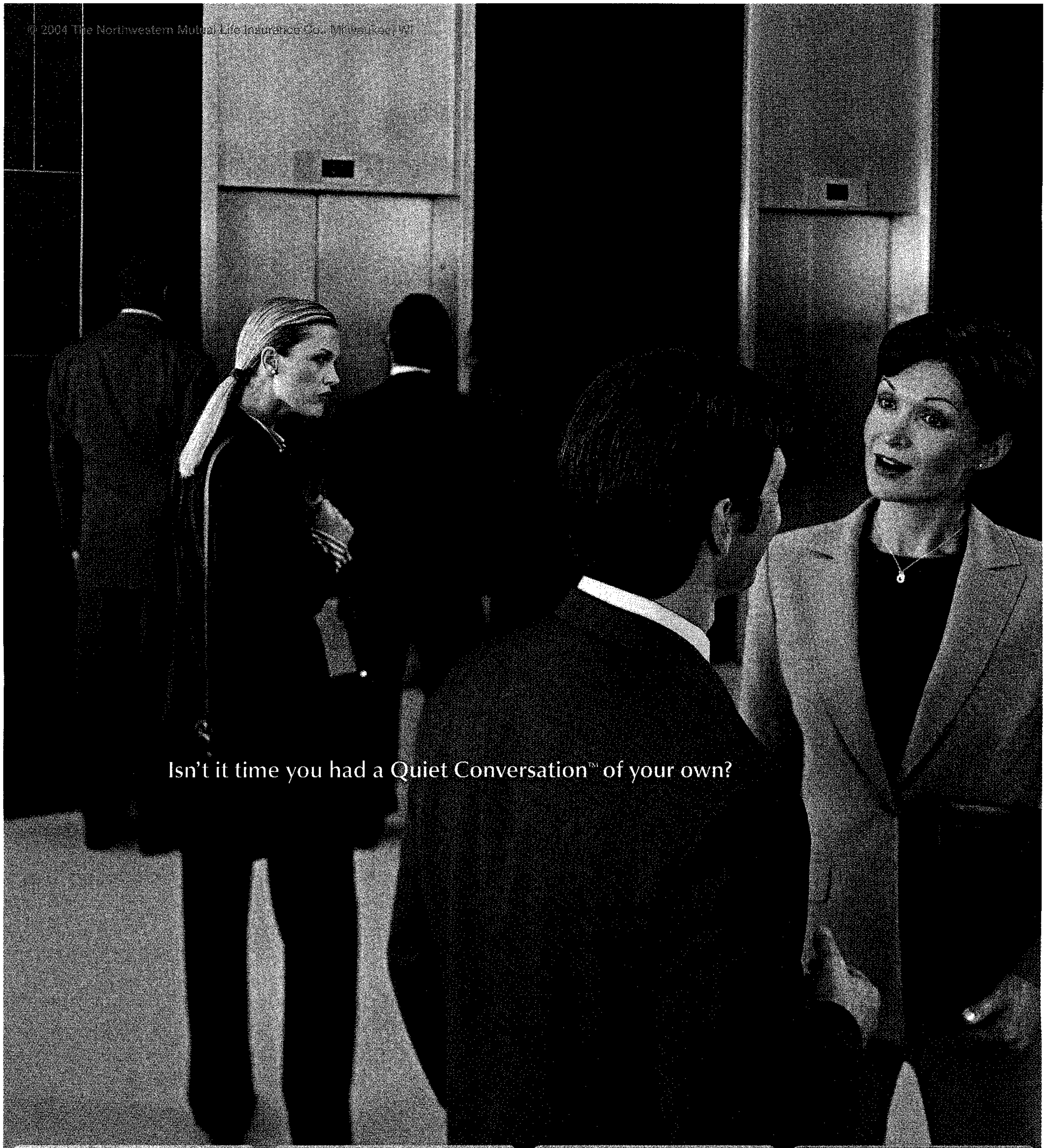

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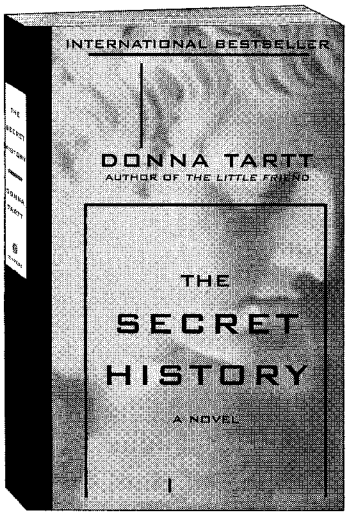

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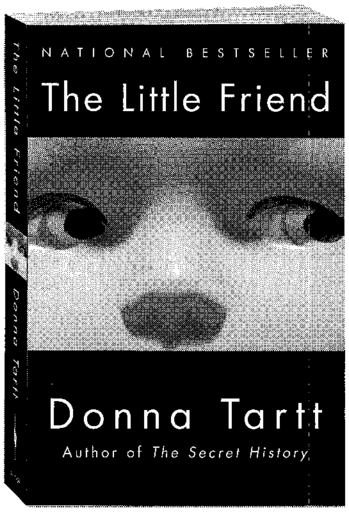

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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE PRINCE OF POSSIBILITY

When Ken Kesey seemed capable of making anything happen.

BY ROBERT STONE

In 1964, Ken Kesey was working in a cabin so deep in the redwoods south of San Francisco that its indifferently painted interior walls seemed to grow seaweed instead of mold. Despite its glass doors, the cabin held the winter light for little more than a midday hour, and the place had the cast of an old-fashioned ale bottle. It smelled of ale, too, or, at least, of beer, and dope. Those were the days of seeded marijuana: castaway seeds sprouted in the spongy rot of what had been the carpet, and plants thrived in the lamplight and the green air. Witchy fingers of morning-glory vine wound through every shelf and corner of that cabin like illuminations in some hoary manuscript.

Across the highway, on the far bank of La Honda Creek, there were more morning-glory vines. They were there, Kesey said, because he had filled the magazines of his shotgun with morning-glory seeds and fired them into the hillside. The morning glory, as few then understood, is a close relative of the magical *ololiuqui* vine, which was said to be used by Chibcha shamans in necromancy and augury. Once ingested, the morning glory's poisonous-tasting seeds produced hours of startling visions and insights. The commercial distributors of the seeds, officially unaware of this, gave the varieties names like Heavenly Blue and Pearly Gates. (A warning: Don't try this at home! The morning-glory seeds sold these days are advertised as being toxic to the point of deadliness.)

La Honda was a strange place, a spot on the road that descended from the western slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains toward the artichoke fields on the coast. Situated mostly within the redwood forest, it had the quality of a raw Northwestern logging town, transported to suburban San Francisco. In spirit, it was a world away from the woodsy gentility of the other Peninsula towns nearby. Its winters were like Seattle's, and its summers pretty much the same. Kesey and his wife, Faye, had moved there in 1963, after their house on Perry Lane, in Menlo Park, was torn down by developers. Perry Lane was one of the small leafy streets that meandered around the Stanford campus then, lined with inexpensive bungalows and inhabited by junior faculty and graduate students. (The Keseys had lived there while Ken did his graduate work at the university and afterward.) The area had a bohemian tradition that extended back to the time of the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen, who lived there at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Kesey, as master of the revels sixty years later, did a great deal to advance that tradition. There were stoned poetry readings and lion hunts in the midnight-dark on the golf course, where chanting hunters danced to bogus veldt rhythms pounded out on kitchenware. One party on Perry Lane involved the construction of a human cat's cradle. Drugs played a role, including the then legal LSD and other substances in experimental use at the V.A. hospital in Menlo Park, where Ken worked as an orderly. The night before the houses on the lane were to be demolished, the residents threw a demented block party at which they trashed one another's houses with sledgehammers and axes in weird psychedelic light. Terrified townies watched from the shadows.

I first met Kesey at one of his world-historical tableaux—a reënactment of the battle of Lake Peipus with broom lances and saucepan helmets. (The Keseys' kitchenware often took a beating in those days, though I can't say I remember ever eating much on Perry Lane.) I was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford's Writing Program and a Teutonic

Knight. Ken, who was Alexander Nevsky, was working on his second novel, "Sometimes a Great Notion."

Kesey and Neal Cassady on their road trip in a polychrome school bus from California to the New York World's Fair, in 1964.

DAVID GAHR

When the Keseys moved to La Honda, it became necessary to drive about fifteen miles up the hill to see them. Somehow the sun-starved, fern-and-moss-covered quality of their new place affected the mood of the partying. There was the main house, where Ken and Faye lived with their three children, Shannon, Zane, and Jed, and several outbuildings, including the studio cabin where Kesey worked. There were also several acres of dark redwood, which Kesey and his friends transformed little by little, placing sculptures and stringing batteries of colored lights. Speakers broadcast Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Ravi Shankar, and the late Beethoven quartets. The house in the redwoods increasingly became a kind of auxiliary residence, clubhouse, cookout—a semi-permanent encampment of people passing through, sleeping off the previous night's party, hoping for more of whatever there had been or might be. It was a halfway house on the edge of possibility, or so it appeared at the time. Between novels, Ken had forged a cadre in search of itself, the core of which—in addition to Kesey's close friend Ken Babbs, who had just returned from Vietnam, where he had flown a helicopter as one of the few thousand uniformed Americans there—consisted at first of people who had lived on or near Perry Lane. Many of them had some connection with Stanford. Others were friends from Ken's youth in Oregon. Old beatniks, like Neal Cassady, the model for Jack Kerouac's Dean Moriarty, in "On the Road," also came around. Some of the locals, less used to deconstructed living than the academic sophisticates in the valley below, saw and heard things that troubled them. As the poet wrote, it was good to be alive and to be young was even better.

More than the inhabitants of any other decade before us, we believed ourselves in a time of our own making. The dim winter day in 1964 when I first drove up to the La Honda house, truant from my attempts at writing a novel, I knew that the future lay before us and I was certain that we owned it. When Kesey came out, we sat on the little bridge over the creek in the last of the light and smoked what was left of the day's clean weed. Ken said something runic about books never being finished and tales remaining forever untold, a Keseyesque ramble for fiddle and banjo, and I realized that he was trying to tell me that he had now finished "Sometimes a Great Notion." Christ, I thought, there is no competing with this guy.

In 1962, he had published "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," a libertarian fable to suit the changing times. It had been a best-seller on publication, and has never been out of print. The book had also been adapted for a Broadway stage production starring Kirk Douglas, who then proposed to do it as a movie. Ken and Faye had gone to the opening night, in that era of formal first nights, with gowns and black tie. Now, a few months later, he had another thicket of epic novel clutched in his mitt, and for all I knew there'd be another one after that.

He really seemed capable of making anything happen. It was beyond writ-

Of All the Girls He'd Ever Dated, Susan Was the One Most Bothered by His Nose Hair.

• •

ing—although, to me, writing was just about all there was. We sat and smoked and possibility came down on us.

Kesey was, more than anyone I knew, in the grip of all that the sixties seemed to promise. Born in 1935 in a town called La Junta, Colorado, on the road west from the Dust Bowl, he had grown up in Oregon, where his father became a successful dairyman. At school, Kesey was a wrestling champion, and champion was still the word for him; it was impossible for his friends to imagine him *losing*, at wrestling or anything else. Leaving the dairy business to his brother Chuck, Kesey had become an academic champion as well, a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Stanford.

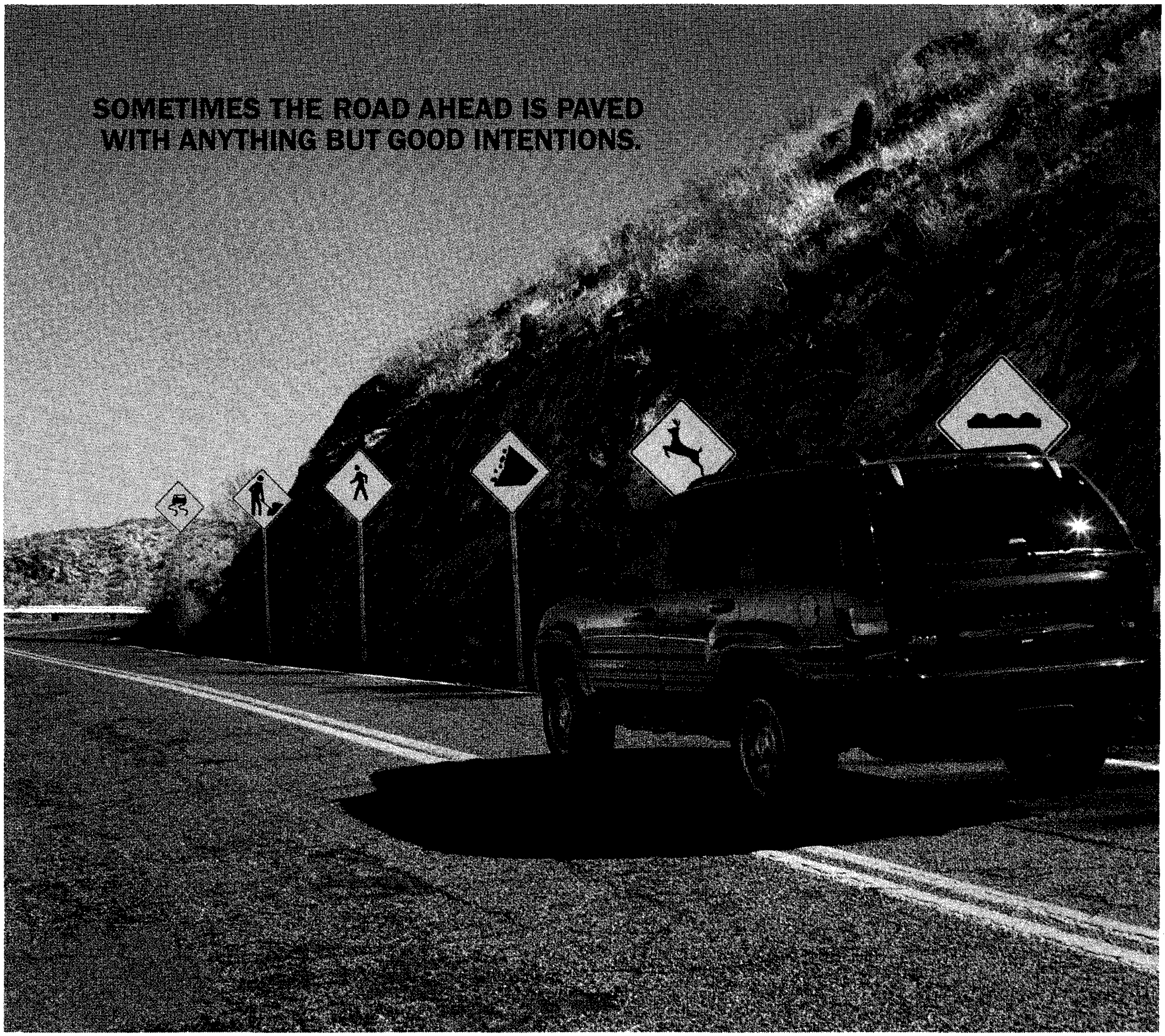
Ken's endorsement, at the age of twenty-six, by Malcolm Cowley, who oversaw his publication at Viking Press, seemed to connect him to a line of "heavyweight" novelists, the hitters, as Norman Mailer put it, of long balls, the wearers of mantles that by then seemed ready to be passed along to the next heroic generation. If American literature ever had a favorite son, distilled from the native grain, it was Kesey. In a way, he personally embodied the winning side in every historical struggle that had served to create the colossus that was nineteen-sixties America; an Anglo-Saxon Protestant Western white male, an Olympic-calibre athlete with an advanced academic degree, he had inherited the progressive empowerment of centuries. There was not an effective migration or social improvement of which he was not, in some near or remote sense, the beneficiary. That he had been born to a family of sodbusters only served to complete the legend. It gave him the extra advantage of not being bound to privilege.

Some years before "Cuckoo's Nest," Ken had written an unpublished Nathanael West-like Hollywood story based on Kesey's unsuccessful attempt to break into the picture business as an actor. All his life, Ken had a certain fascination with Hollywood, as any American fabulist might. He saw it in semi-mythological terms—as almost an autonomous natural phenomenon rather than as a billion-dollar industry. (This touch of naïve fascination embittered his later conflicts over the adaptation of his novels into films.) However, it was as a rising novelist and not as an actor or screenwriter that he faced the spring of 1964. There was no question of his limitless energy. But in the long run, some people thought, the practice of novel-writing would prove to be too sedentary an occupation for so quick an athlete—lonely, and incorporating long silent periods between strokes. Most writers who were not Hemingway spent more time staying awake in quiet rooms than shooting lions in Arusha.

Kesey was listening for some inner voice to tell him precisely what role history and fortune were offering him. Like his old teacher Wallace Stegner, like his friend Larry McMurtry, he had the Western artist's respect for legend. He felt his own power and he knew that others did, too. Certainly his work cast its spell. But, beyond the world of words, he possessed the thing itself, in its ancient mysterious sense. "His charisma was transactional," Vic Lovell, the psychologist to whom Kesey dedicated "Cuckoo's Nest," said to me when we spoke after Ken's death. He meant that Kesey's extraordinary energy did not exist in isolation—it acted on and changed those who experienced it. His ability to offer other people a variety of satisfactions ranging from fun to transcendence was not especially verbal, which is why it remained independent of Kesey's fiction, and it was ineffable, impossible to describe exactly or to encapsulate in a quotation. I imagine that Fitzgerald endowed Jay Gatsby with a similar charisma—enigmatic and elusive, exciting the dreams, envy, and frustration of those who were drawn to him. Charisma is a gift of the gods, the Greeks believed, but, like all divine gifts, it has its cost. (Kesey once composed an insightful bit of doggerel about his own promise to the seekers around him. "Of offering more than what I can deliver," it went, "I have a bad habit, it is true. But I have to offer more than I can deliver to be able to deliver what I do.")

Kesey felt that the world was his own creature and, at the same time—paradoxically, inevitably—that he was an outsider in it, in danger of being cheated out of his own achievement. His forebears had feared and hated the railroads and the Eastern banks. In their place, Kesey saw New York, the academic establishment, Hollywood. When he was growing up in Oregon, I imagine, all power must have seemed to come from somewhere else. Big paper companies and unions, the F.B.I. and the local sheriff's department—he distrusted them all.

While in New York for the opening night of "Cuckoo's Nest," Kesey had caught a glimpse of the preparations for the 1964 World's Fair. It didn't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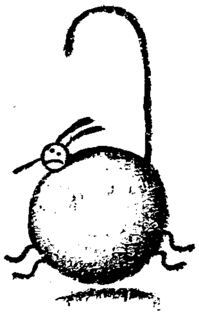
take him long to dream up the idea of riding a bus to the fair, arriving sometime before the scheduled publication date for "Sometimes a Great Notion." Somehow, he and his friends the sports-car driver George Walker and the photographer Mike Hagen managed to buy a 1939 International Harvester school bus and refashion it into a kind of disarmed personnel carrier, with welded compartments inside and an observation platform that looked like a U-boat's conning tower on top. It was wired to play and record tapes, capable of belching forth a cacophony of psychic disconnects and registering the reactions at the same time. There were movie cameras everywhere. Everyone had a hand in the painting of the bus, principally the San Francisco artist Roy Sebern. A sign above the windshield, where the destination would normally be announced, proclaimed, "FURTHUR."

By then, there were a number of footloose wanderers loitering around Kesey's spread in La Honda, ready to ride as soon as the paint was dry—just waiting, really, for Kesey to tell them what to do next. It was said later that one was either on the bus or off the bus—no vain remark, mind you, but an insight of staggering profundity. It meant, perhaps, that some who were physically on the bus were not actually on the bus in spirit. It meant that millions were off the bus, but the bus was coming for them. If you were willing to entertain Kerouac's notion that the blind jazz pianist George Shearing was God, that bus was coming for you.



I was going to New York, too—off the bus, though I expected to encounter it again. My wife, Janice, was attending City College, in Manhattan, and home was where she was. And I was at a strange point in my life. I had gone to the hospital for the treatment of what, in the days before CAT scans, was thought to be a brain tumor. The doctors, after shaving my head and pumping air into my cranium, playing my head like a calliope with their monstrous instruments, had decided that there was no tumor. Or, rather, there was a condition called pseudo-tumor, something that happens sometimes. I was conscious during the operation, on some kind of skull-deadener, so I remember snatches of medical conversation. "When you cut, cut *away* from the brain," one of the surgeons suggested. Another asked me if he could sing while he worked. Anyway, they sent me home alive and cured, and I was happy, albeit bald and with crashing headaches. I would forgo the bus trip.

California, the Menlo Park area around Stanford, was no longer home, but it had once been just short of paradise for me. In the cottages clustered among the live oaks, along the quiet streams that watered Herefords grazing on the yellow tule grass, the happiest time of my life had come and gone. Moving there from the wintry Lower East Side of New York, circa 1960, was like switching from black-and-white to color. One evening, Janice and I went to the Jazz Workshop, in San Francisco, to hear John Coltrane with some friends. We had boiled down peyote, poured the extract into pharmaceutical capsules, and ingested as much of the stuff as we could bear. I swallowed twelve. After sixty seconds of 'Trane, the percussion was undulating in great white waves of jagged frost, the serrated edges as symmetrical as if they had been drawn by an artist's hand. The brass erupted in bands of bright color, streaming out of the brazen instruments like a magician's silk. The entire Jazz Workshop was taken up by a wind from the edge of the earth. Synesthesia, I believe it's called, and I fled it. Janice and a friend of ours came after me. Outside was Chinatown. Its exotic effects were never as potent as they were for me that night.

Like everything that was essential to the sixties, the Kesey cross-country trip has been mythologized. If you can remember it, the old saw goes, you weren't there. But the ride in Ken's multicolored International Harvester school bus was a journey of such holiness that being there—mere vulgar location—was instantly beside the point. From the moment the first demented teen-ager waved a naked farewell as Neal Cassady threw the clutch, everything entered the numinous.

Who rode the bus, who rode it all the way to the World's Fair and all the way back, has become a matter of conjecture. The number has expanded like the opening-night audience for "Le Sacre du Printemps," a memorial multiplication in which a theatre seating eight hundred has come, over time, to accommodate several thousand eyewitnesses.

Who was actually on the bus? I, who waited, with the wine-stained manuscript of my first novel, for the rendezvous in New York, have a count. Tom Wolfe, who did not see the bus back then at all but is extremely accurate with facts, has a similar one. Cassady drove—the world's greatest driver, who could roll a joint while backing a 1937 Packard onto the lip of the Grand Canyon. Kesey went, of course. And Ken Babbs, fresh from Nam, full of radio nomenclature and with a command voice that put cops to flight. Jane Burton, a pregnant young philosophy professor who declined no challenges. Also George Walker; Sandy Lehmann-Haupt, whose electronic genius was responsible for the sound system. There was Mike Hagen, who shot most of the expedition's film footage. A former infantry officer, Ron Bevirt, whom everybody called Hassler, a clean-cut guy from Missouri, took photographs. There were two relatives of Kesey's—his brother Chuck and his cousin Dale—and Ken Babbs's brother John. Kesey's lawyer's brother-in-law Steve Lambrecht was along as well. And the beautiful Paula Sundsten.

To Ken, to America in 1964, World's Fairs were still a hot number. As for polychrome buses, one loses perspective; the Day-Glo vehicle full of hipsters is now such a spectral archetype of the American road. I'm not sure what it looked like then. With Cassady at the throttle, the bus perfected an uncanny reverse homage to "On the Road," travelling *east* over Eisenhower's interstates. Like "On the Road," the bus trip exalted velocity. Similarly, it scorned limits: this land was your land, this land was my land—the bus could turn up anywhere. It celebrated sunsets in four time zones, music on the tinny radio, tears in the rain. If the roadside grub was not as tasty as it had been in Kerouac's day, at least the highway grades were better.

Ken had an instinctive distaste for the metropolis and its pretensions. He was not the only out-of-town writer who thought it a shame that so many publishers were based in New York, and

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TO DREAMS

I'm still living at all the old addresses,
Wearing dark glasses even indoors,
On the hush-hush sharing my bed
With phantoms, visiting the kitchen

After midnight to check the faucet.
I'm late for school, and when I get there
No one seems to recognize me.
I sit disowned, sequestered and withdrawn.

These small shops open only at night
Where I make my unobtrusive purchases,
These back-door movie houses in seedy neighborhoods
Still showing grainy films of my life,

The hero always full of extravagant hope,
Then losing it all in the end?—whatever it was—
Then walking out into the cold, disbelieving light,
Waiting close-lipped at the exit.

—*Charles Simic*

he looked forward to a time when the book business would regionally diversify, supposedly bringing our literature closer to its roots in American soil. But the raising of a World's Fair in the seething city was to Kesey both a breath of assurance and a challenge. Fairs and carnivals, exhibitional wonders of all sorts, were his very meat. He wondered whether the big town would trip over its own grandiose chic when faced with such a homespun concept. Millions were supposed to be coming, a horde of visitors foreign and domestic, all expecting the moon.

The bus set off sometime in June. Nineteen-sixty-four was an election year. To baffle the rubes along their route, Kesey and Cassady had painted a motto over the psychedelia on the side of the bus—"A Vote for Barry Is a Vote for Fun"—hoping to pass for psychotic Republicans hyping Goldwater. The country cops of the highways and byways, however, took them for gypsies and waved them through one town after another. Presumably, the vaguely troubled America that was subjected to this drive-by repressed its passing image as meaningless, a hallucination. Sometime around then, someone offered a lame joke in the tradition of Major Hoople, something about "merry pranksters." (Major Hoople—a droll comic-strip character at the time, the idler husband of a boarding-house proprietress—was one of Cassady's patron gods.) The witless remark was carried too far, along with everything else, and for forty years thereafter people checked for the clownish fringe at our cuffs or imagined us with red rubber noses.

Eventually, the bus pulled up in front of the apartment building on West Ninety-seventh Street, in New York, where Janice and I were living with our two children. Our apartment was notorious among our friends for its ugliness and brick-wall views. Suddenly, the place was filled with people painted all colors. The bus waited outside, unguarded, broadcasting Ray Charles, attracting hostile attention with its demented Goldwater slogan. We and the kids took our places on top of the bus, ducking trees on our way through Central Park. Downtown, a well-fed button man came out of Vincent's clam bar to study the bus and the tootling oddballs on its roof. He paused thoughtfully for a moment and finally said, "Get offa there!" That seemed to be the general sentiment. Other citizens offered the finger and limp-wristed "Heil Hitler"s. Later, the gang drove the bus to 125th Street. The street was going to burn in a few weeks, and, but for the mercy of time, some pranksters would have burned with it.

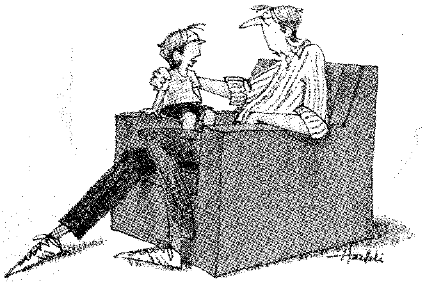
There was the after-bus party, where Kerouac, out of rage at our health and youth and mindlessness—but mainly out of jealousy at Kesey for hijacking his beloved sidekick, Cassady—despised us, and wouldn't speak to Cassady, who, with the trip behind him, looked about seventy years old. A man attended who claimed to be Terry Southern but wasn't. I asked Kerouac for a cigarette and was refused. If I hadn't seen him around in the past I would have thought that this Kerouac was an impostor, too—I couldn't believe how miserable he was, how much he hated all the people who were in awe of him. You should buy your own smokes, said drunk, angry Kerouac. He was still dramatically handsome then; the next time I saw him he would be a red-faced baby, sick and swollen. He was a published, admired writer, I thought. How could he be so unhappy? But we, the people he called "surfers," were happy. We left the party and drove to a bacchanal and snooze in Millbrook, New York, where death and transfiguration had replaced tournament polo as a ride on the edge.

The bus riders visited the fair in a spirit of decent out-of-town respect for the power and glory of plutocracy. They filmed everything in sight and recorded everything in earshot. Like most young Americans in 1964, they were committed to the idea of a World's Fair as groovy, which in retrospect can only be called sweet. Sweet but just the least bit defiant. Also not a little ripped, since driver and passengers had consumed mind-altering drugs in a quantity and variety unrivalled until the prison pharmacy at the New Mexico state penitentiary fell to rioting cons.

And, of course, the fair was a mistake for everyone. Now we know that World's Fairs are always bad news. In 1939, the staff of a few national pavilions in New York had nothing to tell the world except that their countries no longer existed. The hardware of national gewgaws and exhibits went as scrap metal to the war effort. In 1964,

ON THE TOWN

Pop Culture



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the fair produced nothing but sinister urban legends in unsettling numbers, grisly stories of abduction, murder, and coverups. Children were said to have disappeared. Body parts were allegedly concealed in the sleek aluminum spheres and silos. It was the hottest summer in many years. Some of the passengers were so long at the fair that they went home without their souls. Jane, the philosophy professor, insists to this day that she made it to the fair only because she had lost her purse on the first day of the trip. Back in California, she became a mother and went to law school. Kesey and Cassady went home, too. Fame awaited them, along with the same fascinated loathing that Kerouac and Ginsberg had endured. We couldn't imagine it at the time, but we were on the losing side of the culture war.

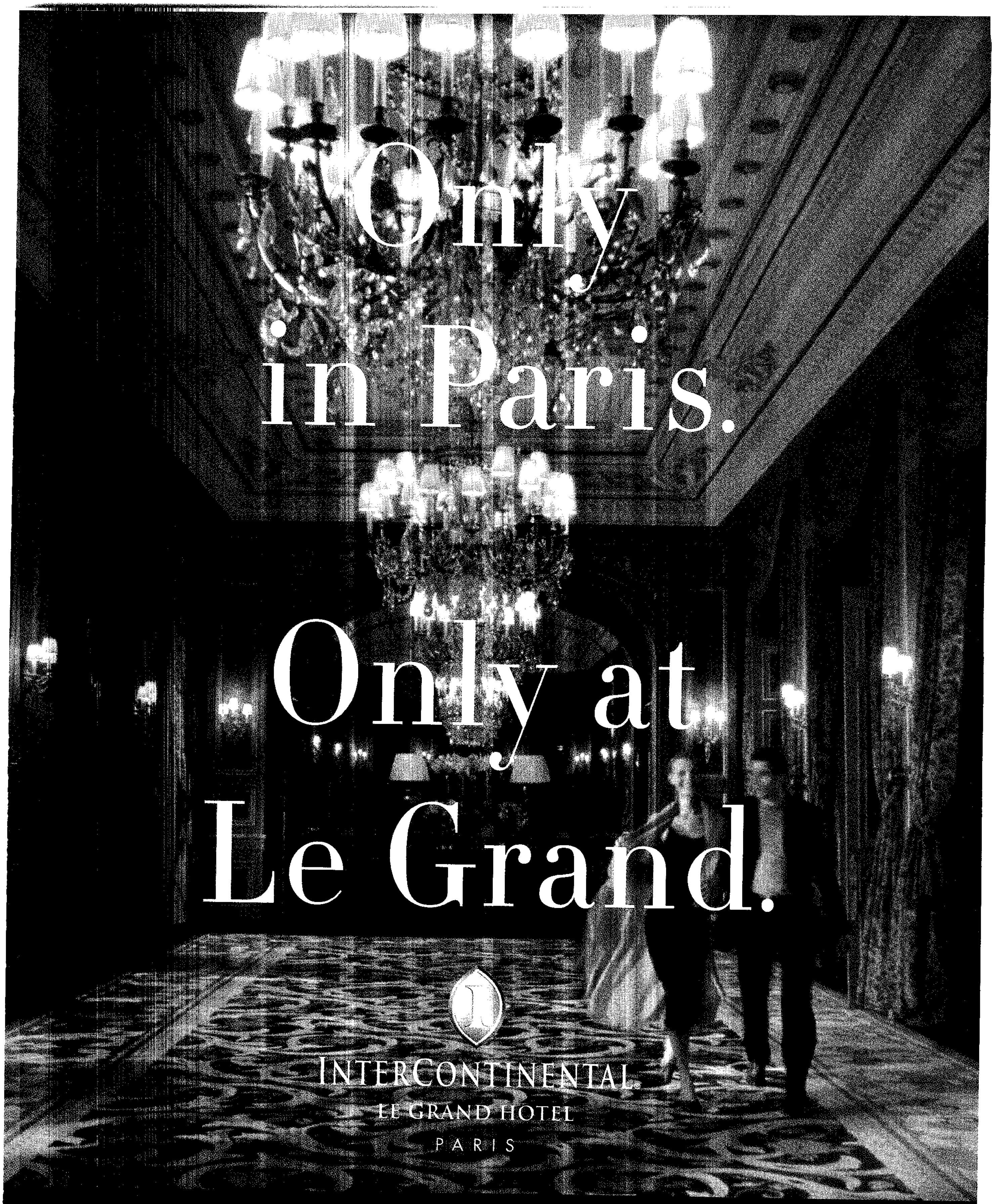
It was a war that got meaner as the world got smaller. Ginsberg and Kerouac, in the fifties, had been set upon by illiterate feature writers concocting insulting lies about their personal hygiene and reporting the clever wisecracks that famous people were supposed to have delivered at their expense. Now the drug thing was being used to make the wrongos feel the fire. At the end of the fifties, Cassady, who was not exactly the Napoleon of crime, had done two years in San Quentin for supposedly selling a few joints. Sometime after Kesey's return to California, in 1965, his house in La Honda was raided during a party. The native country he had just visited in such state was biting back. Ken and some friends were charged with possession of narcotics. Then, on a San Francisco rooftop one foggy night, while watching the Alcatraz searchlight probe the bay's radius, he was arrested again on the same charge. At this, he and his friends composed a giggly, overwrought suicide note addressed to the ocean. ("O Ocean," it began, grimly omitting the "h" to indicate high seriousness and despair.) Fleeing south, Kesey made it to the same area in Mexico where Ram Dass and other prototypical acid cranks had conducted their early séances.

In New York, I got a telegram that declared "Everything Is Beginning Again," an Edenic prospect I had no power to resist. I had finally finished my novel, but it would not be published for months, and I was at the time employed by what our lawyers called "a weekly tabloid with a heavy emphasis on sex." I had not published anything much beyond "SKYDIVER DEVOURED BY STARVING BIRDS" and "WEDDING NIGHT TRICK BREAKS BRIDE'S BACK"—fables of misadventure and desperate desire for the distraction of the supermarket browser. Nevertheless, I was the only person *Esquire* could find who knew where Kesey was. By then, his work and his drug-laced adventures in a transforming San Francisco were well known. *Esquire* paid my way south.

It was the autumn of 1966, and Ken, Faye, their children, and some of their friends were staying near Manzanillo. In 1966, the Pacific Coast between Zihuatanejo and Puerto Vallarta did not look the way it looks today. The road ran for many miles along the foot of the Sierra Madre, bordering an enormous jungle crowned by the Colima volcano itself. The peak thrust its fires nearly four thousand metres into the clouds. At the edge of the mountains, the black-and-white sand beach was so empty that you could walk for hours without passing a town, or even the simplest dwelling. The waves were deafening, patrolled by laughing gulls and pelicans.

Today, Manzanillo is Mexico's biggest Pacific port and the center of an upscale tourist area. In those days, it seemed like the edge of the world, poor and beautiful beyond belief. One of the hotels in town advertised its elevator on a sandwich board outside. Manzanillo's commanding establishment was a naval base that supported a couple of gunboats.

The Keseys' home was a few miles beyond the bay in a complex of three concrete buildings with crumbling roofs, partly enclosed by a broken concrete wall. We called one of the buildings Casa Purina. Despite its chaste evocations, the name derived from the place's having once housed some operation of the Purina company, worldwide producers of animal feed and aids to husbandry. In the sheltered rooms, we stashed our gear and slung our hammocks. We occupied our time seeking oracular guidance in the I Ching and



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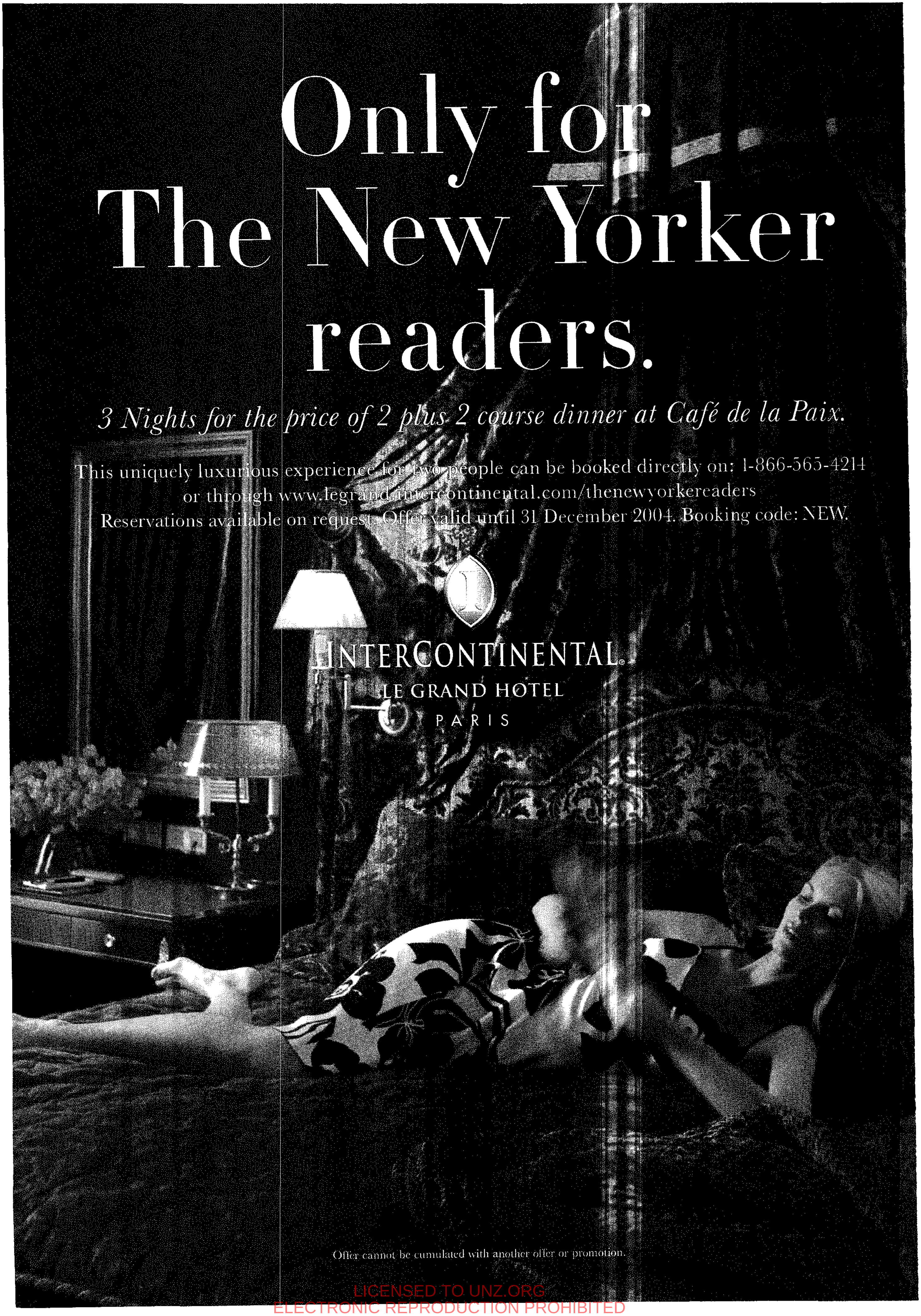

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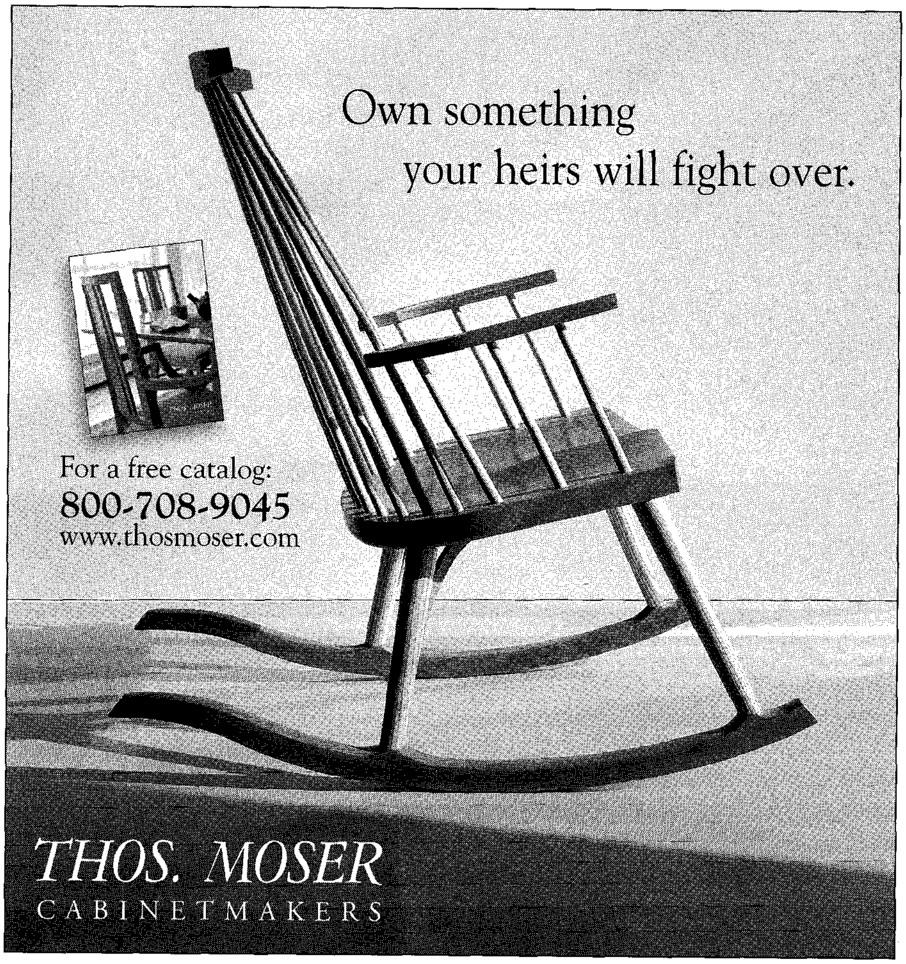
pursuing now vanished folk arts, like cleaning the seeds from our marijuana. (Older heads will remember how the seeds were removed from bud clusters by shaking them loose onto the inverted top of a shoebox. Since the introduction of seedless dope, this homely craft has gone the way of great-grandma's butter churn.)

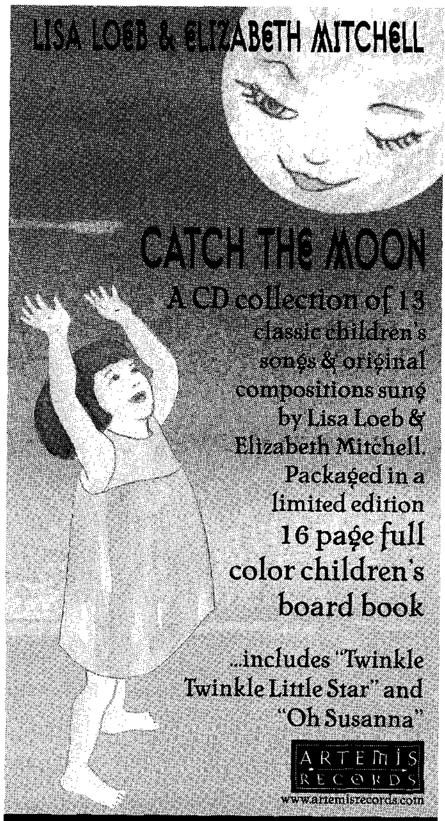
Our landlord was a Chinese-Mexican grocer, who referred to us as *existencialistas*, which we thought was a good one. He provided electricity, which enabled us to take warm showers and listen to Wolfman Jack and the Texaco opera broadcasts on Saturday. No trace remained, fortunately, of whatever the Purina people had been up to between those whitewashed walls.

We were an unstable gathering, difficult to define. The California drug police, whatever they were called at that time, professed to believe that we were a gang of narcotics smugglers and criminals, our headquarters hard to locate, perhaps protected by the local crime lords. In fact, we were a cross between a Stanford fraternity party and an underfunded libertine writers' conference.

We had no nearby neighbors except the grocery store, and most people along the coast hardly knew we were there, at first. The Casa was far from town, and there was little traffic along the intermittently paved highway that wound over the Sierra toward Guadalajara. It consisted mainly of the local buses, whose passengers might spot our laundry hanging in the salt breeze or glimpse our puppy pack of golden-haired kiddies racing over black sand toward the breakers. Several times a day, the gleaming first-class coaches of the Flecha Amarilla company would hurtle past, a streak of bright silver and gold, all curves and tinted glass. With their crushed Air Corps caps and stylish sunglasses, the Flecha Amarilla drivers were gods, eyeball to eyeball with fate. Everything and everyone along the modest road gave way to them.

In appreciation of the spectacle they offered, these buses sometimes drew a salute from Cassady. He would stand on a ruined wall and present arms to the bus with a hammer, which for some reason he carried everywhere in a leather





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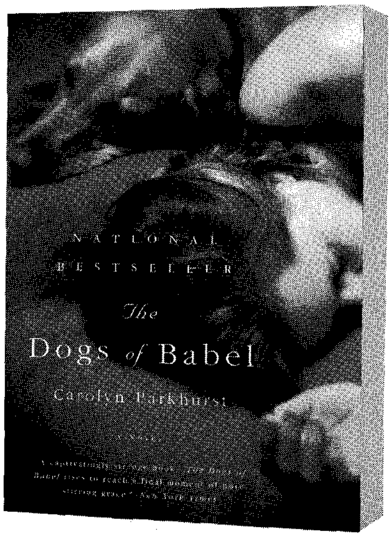

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holster on his hip. How the middle-class Mexican coach passengers reacted to the random instant of Neal against the landscape I can only imagine. Sometimes he brought his parrot, Rubiaco, in its cage, holding it up so that Rubiaco and the Flecha Amarilla passengers could inspect each other, as though he were offering the parrot for sale. Cassady in Manzanillo was extending his career as a character in other people's work—Kerouac had used him, as would Kesey, Tom Wolfe, and I. The persistent calling forth and reinventing of his existence was an exhausting process even for such an extraordinary mortal as Neal. Maybe it has earned him the immortality he yearned for. It certainly seems to have shortened his life.

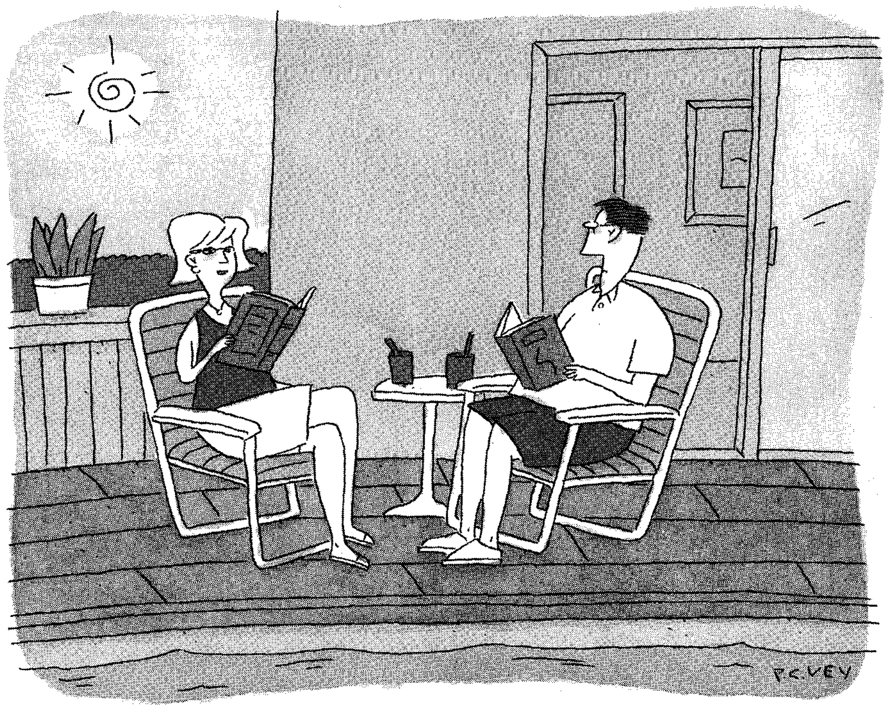
People who live in the tropics sometimes claim to have seen a gorgeous green flash spreading out from the horizon just after sunset on certain clear evenings. Maybe they have. Not me. What I will never forget is the greening of the day at first light on the shores north of Manzanillo Bay. I imagine that color so vividly that I know, by ontology, that I must have seen it. In the moments after dawn, before the sun had reached the peaks of the Sierra, the slopes and valleys of the rain forest would explode in green light, erupting inside a silence that seemed barely to contain it. When the sun's rays spilled over the ridge, they discovered dozens of silvery waterspouts and dissolved them into smoky rainbows. Then the silence would give way and the jungle noises rose to blue Heaven. Those mornings, day after day, made nonsense of the examined life, but they made everyone smile. All of us, stoned or otherwise, caught in the vortex of dawn, would freeze in our tracks and stand to, squinting in the pain of the light, sweating, grinning. We called that light Prime Green; it was primal, primary, *primo*.

The high-intensity presence of Mexico was inescapable. Even in the *barrancas* of the wilderness, you felt the country's immanence. Poverty, formality, fatalism, and violence seemed to charge even uninhabited landscapes. I was young enough to rejoice in this. On certain mornings, when the tide was low and the wind came from the necessary quarter, you could stand on the beach and hear the bugle call from the naval base in the city. Although it had a brief section that suggested Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italien," the notes of the Mexican call to colors were pure heartbreak. They always suggested to me the triumphalism of the vanquished, the heroic, engaged in disastrous sacrifice. Those were the notes that had called thousands of lancers against the handful of Texans at the Alamo, that had called wave after wave of Juárez's soldiers against the few dozen Foreign Legionnaires at Camerone. Had the same strains echoed off the rock of Chapultepec when the young cadets wrapped themselves in the flag and leaped from the Halls of Montezuma to defy the Marines?

Does any other army figure so large in the romantic institutional memories of its enemies? All those peasant soldiers, underequipped in everything but the courage for Pyrrhic victories and gorgeous suicidal gestures. Naïfs led by Quixotes against grim nameless professionals with nothing to lose, loyal to their masters' greed.

So our exile provided more than a hugely spectacular scenic backdrop. The human setting, never altogether out of view, was ongoing conflict. Quite selfishly, we loved the color of history there, the high drama—man at his fiercest. We imagined it all flat out, as presented by Rivera, Orozco, and the rest, the dark and light, La Adelita, El Grito, Malinche. Hard-riding *rebeldes*, leering *calaveras*, honor, betrayal, the songs of revolution. We had ourselves an opera. Or, as someone remarked, a Marvel comic. All this naturally gave our own lives a quality of fatefulness and melodrama. We were fugitives, after all—at least, Kesey was.

One thing we failed to grasp in 1966 was that Mexico was a nation at a turning point. Time and geography had caused it to require many things of the United States, but a band of pot-smoking, impoverished *existencialistas* who danced naked on the beach and frightened away the respectable tourists was simply not one of them. Gradually, as our presence made itself manifest, it drew crowds of the curious. Young people, especially, were fascinated by the anarchy, by the lights and the music. The local authorities became watchful. At that time, marijuana was disapproved of in Mexico, associated with a low element locally and with the kind of unnecessary gringos who lived on mangoes and whose antics encrimsoned the



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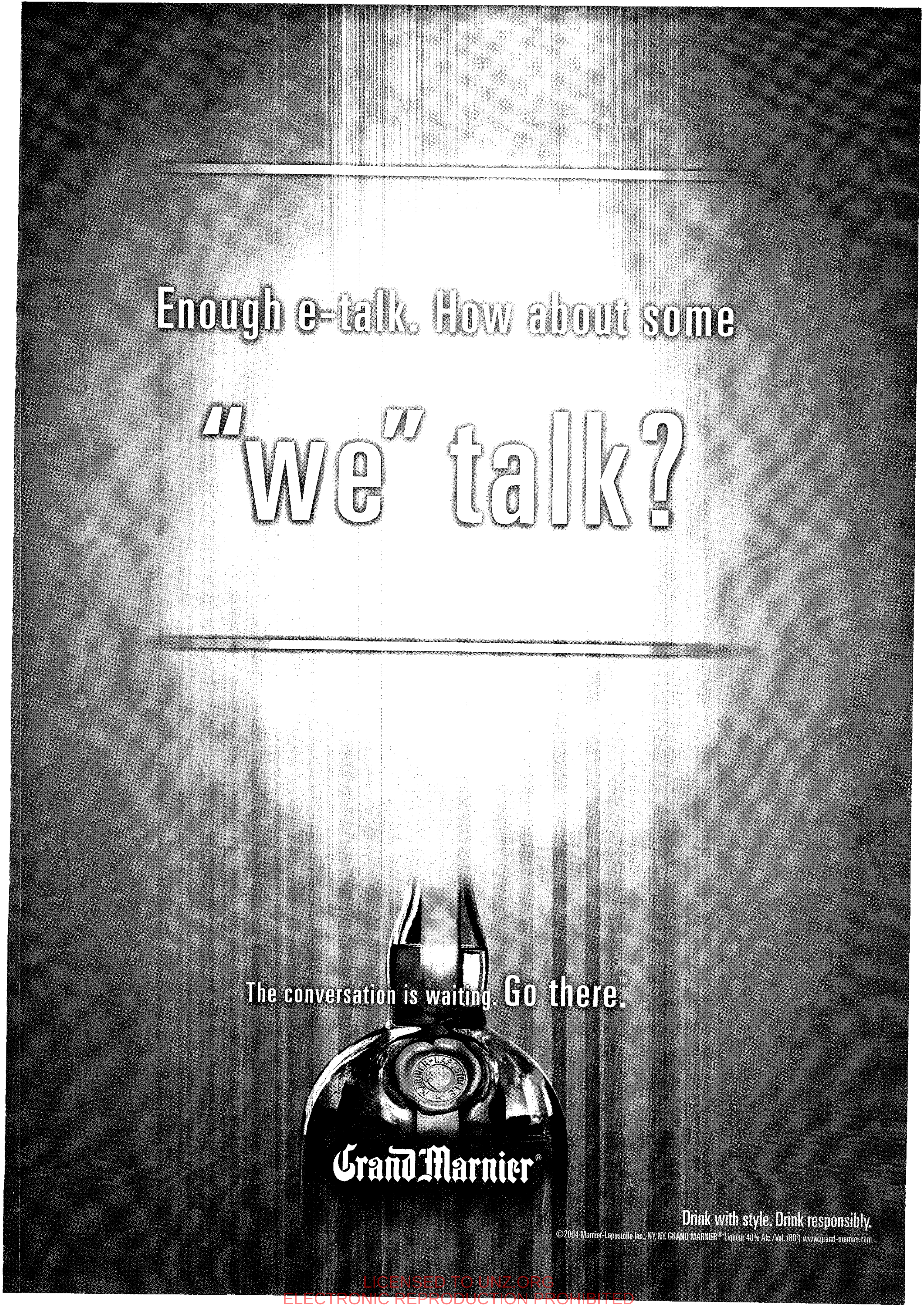
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the conversation CIRCLE

GREAT THEATRE GETS PEOPLE TALKING.

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner, author of "Angels In America," recently chatted about his new Broadway musical.

Set in 1963 in Lake Charles, Louisiana, "Caroline, or Change" explores the complex relationship between a young Jewish boy and his family's African-American maid. Like Kushner's previous works, his first musical production both entertains and challenges audiences to confront issues of the day. "Caroline, or Change" was nominated for six Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

CAROLINE, or CHANGE
A NEW MUSICAL

What inspired you to write "Caroline, or Change?"

Kushner: Memories of my childhood in Louisiana; my mother's death in 1990; curiosity about writing a musical; hopes of striking it rich writing a musical. In other words, delusion, and all the usual stuff—trauma, guilt, revenge.

How does "Caroline, or Change" differ from the traditional Broadway musical?

Kushner: I don't know what that is—a traditional musical. I think "Caroline" is in the tradition of what I love about Broadway musicals I love: It celebrates and works variations on American musical idioms from blues to klezmer. It's funny, it's sad, it's historical, it's political, it's personal, it's about love and loss. You leave humming the tunes. It's indebted to Rodgers and Hammerstein, the Gershwins, Bernstein and Sondheim. The traditional musicals we treasure have mostly been pretty *untraditional.*

Collectively, your plays can be seen to comprise a political movement. If so, what is your ultimate aim?

Kushner: To take over the planet, and then to lose twenty-five pounds.

You've been described as a playwright and an activist. Is it possible to be both?

Kushner: My day job is playwright. My citizen job is activist; that's every citizen's job. I succeed and fail at both my jobs, but I try to do them both.

They say that, in polite conversation, one should avoid religion and politics. Do you agree?

Kushner: No, I don't. I think in polite conversation one should avoid talking with food in one's mouth or saying things like, "You're having SECONDS?" or "We saw your new play—the last one was much better." But since when is it polite to be boring? People who avoid theology and politics are boring. Being boring is RUDE.

While "Caroline, or Change" is set in a slightly distant past, what message does it have for contemporary audiences?

Kushner: I don't write plays with messages. Bottles found on the beach sometimes have messages; fortune cookies have messages. I want people to be entertained. I want them to be moved to thought, to questioning—and also to be MOVED.

What's next for you?

Kushner: I will be running a fruit-smoothie concession this summer at the Republican National Convention.

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jowls of free-spending trophy fishermen from Orange County. From the start, I think, the authorities in the state of Colima understood that there was more hemp than Heidegger at the root of our cerebration, and that many of us had trouble distinguishing Being from Nothingness by three in the afternoon. At the same time, a sort of fix was in: Ken was paying *mordida* through his lawyers, enough to deter initiatives on the part of law enforcement.

We were bearing witness, unwittingly, to a worldwide development that had begun in the United States. The original laws forbidding classified substances had been conceived in the language of therapy, emphasizing the discouragement of such addictive nostrums as "temperance cola" and cocaine tonics. From the fright tabloid to the police blotter the matter went, providing the founding documents of a police underworld, featuring informers, jail time, and the third degree. The resulting damage to American and foreign jurisprudence, the outlaw fortunes made, the destroyed children, and the gangsterism are all well known. What had been a way for Indian workmen to reinforce the pulque they drank and sweated out by sundown, a disagreeable practice of the hoi polloi, became, once it was established as a police matter, Chicago-style prohibition on a global scale. Nothing on earth was more serious than people getting loaded, America was told. Nothing, travellers found, so preoccupied stone-faced cops from Mauretania to Luzon as the possibility of a joint in a sock, hash in a compact.

In Mexico, we failed to interpret the developments on the drug front to such a degree that when a plainclothes Mexican policeman—Agent No. 1, as he described himself—appeared to make awkward probing conversation with us in the local cantina we were more amused by his stereotypical overbearing manner than alarmed. We should have seen the deadly future he represented.

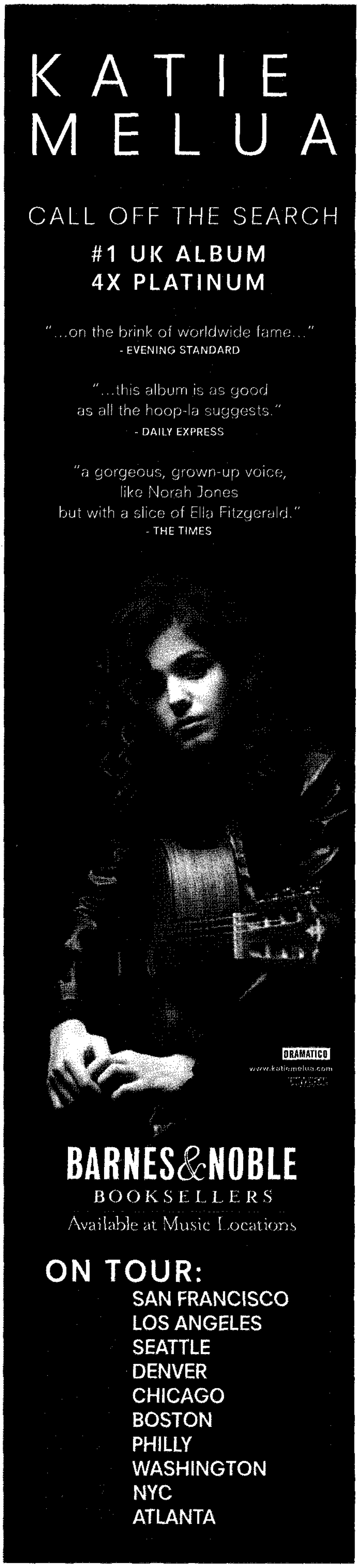
Some twenty years earlier, Cassady had brought Kerouac down to Mexico and revealed it to him as the happy end of the rainbow. In "On the Road," Kerouac records the dreamy observations of Cassady's character, Dean Moriarty, as he provides his *compañero*—Jack, in the role of Sal Paradise—with lyrical insights into a Land That Care Forgot, Mexico as a garden without so much as the shadow of a snake. "Oh this is too great to be true," Dean exults, from the moment their jalopy clears Nuevo Laredo. "Damn" and "What kicks!" and "Oh, what a land!" Like his model, he goes on at length:

> Sal, I am digging the interiors of these homes as we pass them—these gone doorways and you look inside and see beds of straw and little brown kids sleeping and stirring to wake, their thoughts congealing from the empty mind of sleep, their selves rising and the mothers cooking up breakfast in iron pots, and dig them shutters they have for windows and the old men, the *old men* are so cool and grand and not bothered by anything. There's no *suspicion* here, nothing like that. Everybody's cool, everybody looks at you with such straight brown eyes and they don't say anything, just *look*, and in that look all of the human qualities are soft and subdued and still there.

In 1957, I had sat in the radio shack of the U.S.S. Arneb, a young sailor with my earphones tuned to Johnson and Winding, reading all this in the copy of "On the Road" that my mother had sent me. If it seems strange that my copy of this hipster testament came from my mother, it would have seemed far more improbable—at least, to me—that I would one day be sharing the mercies of Mexico with some of the characters from the book. Nor would I have believed that anyone, anywhere, ever, talked like Dean Moriarty. I was twice wrong, and, as they say, be careful what you wish for.

As we sat in the cantina, watching Agent No. 1 grow more drunk and less convivial with every round, I began to see that Dean Moriarty and his author had been mistaken in some respects. In the bent brown eyes of the agent, I beheld grave suspicion, and my own thoughts began to congeal around the prospect of waking up to breakfast in a Mexican jail.

There are working-class taverns in Mexico (and some pretty fancy ones, too) where the drinking atmosphere seems to change over the course of a few hours in a manner that is somewhat the reverse of similar establishments in other countries. For example, a customer might arrive in the early evening to find the place loud with laughter and conversations about baseball or local politics and gossip, the jukebox blaring, the bartender all smiles. Then, as time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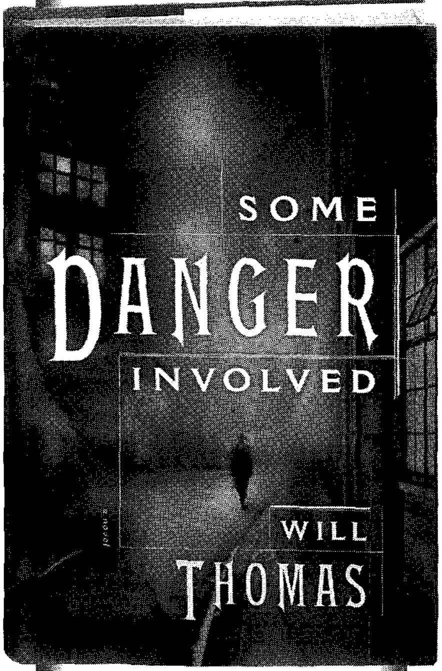

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progressed and the patrons advanced more deeply into their liquor, things would seem to quiet down. By a late hour, the joint, just as crowded, would grow so subdued that the rattle of a coin on the wooden bar might attract the attention of the whole room. Men who had been exchanging jokes a short time before would stand unsteadily and look around with an unfocussed caution, as though reassessing the place and their drinking buddies. These reassessments sometimes seemed unfavorable, at which point it was time to leave.

Thus it went with Agent No. 1. He showed us his badge and indeed it was embossed with the number 1 and he assured us that, as cops went, he was *número uno* as well. He told stories about Elizabeth Taylor in Puerto Vallarta—how her stolen jewelry was returned at the very whisper of his name in the criminal hangouts of P.V. His mood kept deteriorating. He got drunker and would not go away. He told us that Mexico's attitude toward marijuana was very liberal. His private attitude was, too, though he never used drugs himself, no, no, no. Did we know that we were entitled to keep some marijuana for our own personal use? Quite a generous amount. I have come to recognize the phrase "your own personal use" employed in a tone of good-natured tolerance as a standard police trap around the world; whatever you admit to possessing is likely to get you put away.

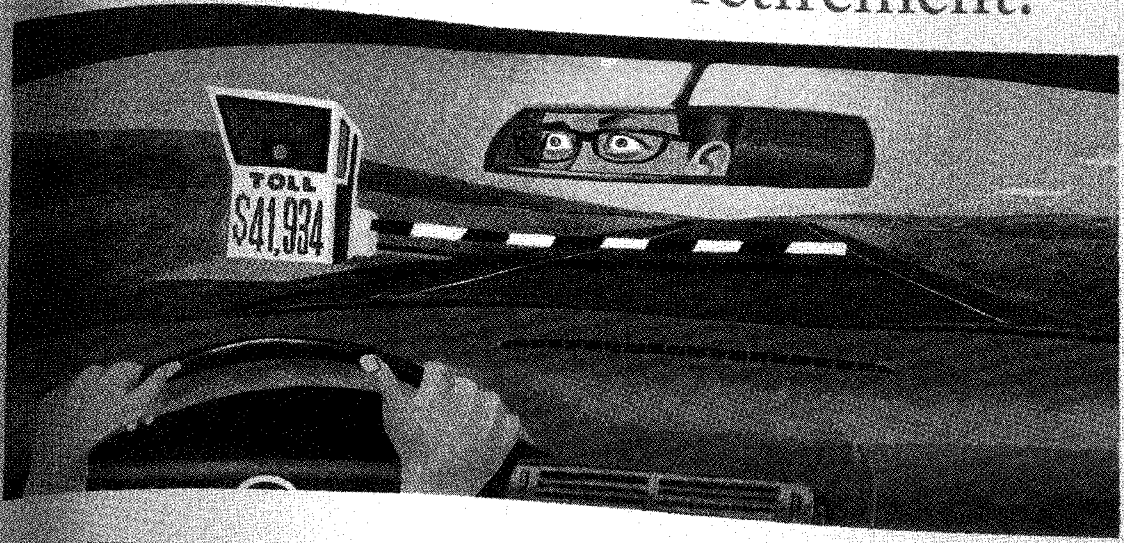
While I let the *federale* buy me drinks, my two companions teased him as though we were all players in "A Touch of Evil." Ken Babbs's Vietnam post-traumatic stress took the form of a dreadful fearlessness, which, though terrifying to timid adventurers like myself, would come in handy more than once. George Walker had a similar spirit. For my part, I went for the persona of one polite but dumb, an attitude that annoyed the agent even more than Babbs's and Walker's transparent mockery. For some inexplicable reason, I thought I could mollify him by talking politics. The agent was an anti-Communist and excitable on the topic. I have come to realize that in the context of Mexico in 1966 this portended no good. Eventually, having bought every round and rather fumbled his exploratory probe, Agent No. 1 climbed into his Buick and drove off toward Guadalajara. His hateful parting glance told us that this was *hasta luego*, not *adiós*.

We reported our encounter to Kesey, who was philosophical; he had been brooding, wandering the beach at night. In the morning, he would come back to sleep, exhausted, looking for Faye to lead him to cool and darkness, shelter from the green blaze and the reënactment of creation that could explode at any moment. What was happening to Kesey? He didn't seem to be writing much. It was impossible to tell if we were witnessing a stage of literary development, a personal Gethsemane, or an apotheosis. Some fundamental change seemed to be taking place in the world, and as he smoked the good local herb on the slope of the Sierra and watched the lightning flashes and the fires of the volcano he pondered what his role in it might be. Before his flight to Mexico, he had attended a Unitarian conference at Asilomar, on the California coast, during the course of which a number of people had come to believe that he was God. He had spun their minds with unanswerable gnomic challenges and imaginary paradoxes. Still, it was an especially heady compliment, coming from the Unitarians. Kesey referred to the Unitarian elders, patrician world citizens in sailor caps and fishermen's sweaters, as "the pipes," because they took their tobacco in hawthorn- and maple-scented meerschaums and used the instruments to punctuate their thoughtful, humane fireside remarks. "If you've got it all together," Kesey asked one confounded elder, "what's that all around it?"

Local adolescents took to hanging out at the Casa. Some of them were musicians. On the anniversary of Mexican independence, we decided to hold what someone called an acid test. People appeared on the beach with rum and firecrackers. We put tricolor Mexican bunting up. By this point, Cassady had found it liberating to restrict his diet to methamphetamine. He went everywhere with Rubiaco, the parrot. So constant was their companionship, so exact was Rubiaco's rendering of Cassady's speech, that without looking it was im-

Chapter 28 Investing for Retirement

It's surprising what most investors don't know about the road to retirement.



When most investors start out on the road to retirement, the only thing they can see is where they want to end up. Yet, what they should really be watching is how much they're being charged to make the trip. Because when it comes to fees and expenses, the little things can really add up.

For example, take a hypothetical fund with an expense ratio of 1.3 percent versus one with an expense ratio of just 0.3 percent. Applied to a rollover investment of $100,000, returning 8% and compounded over 15 years, the difference adds up to $41,934. That's a hefty toll to pay when the goal is to retire.

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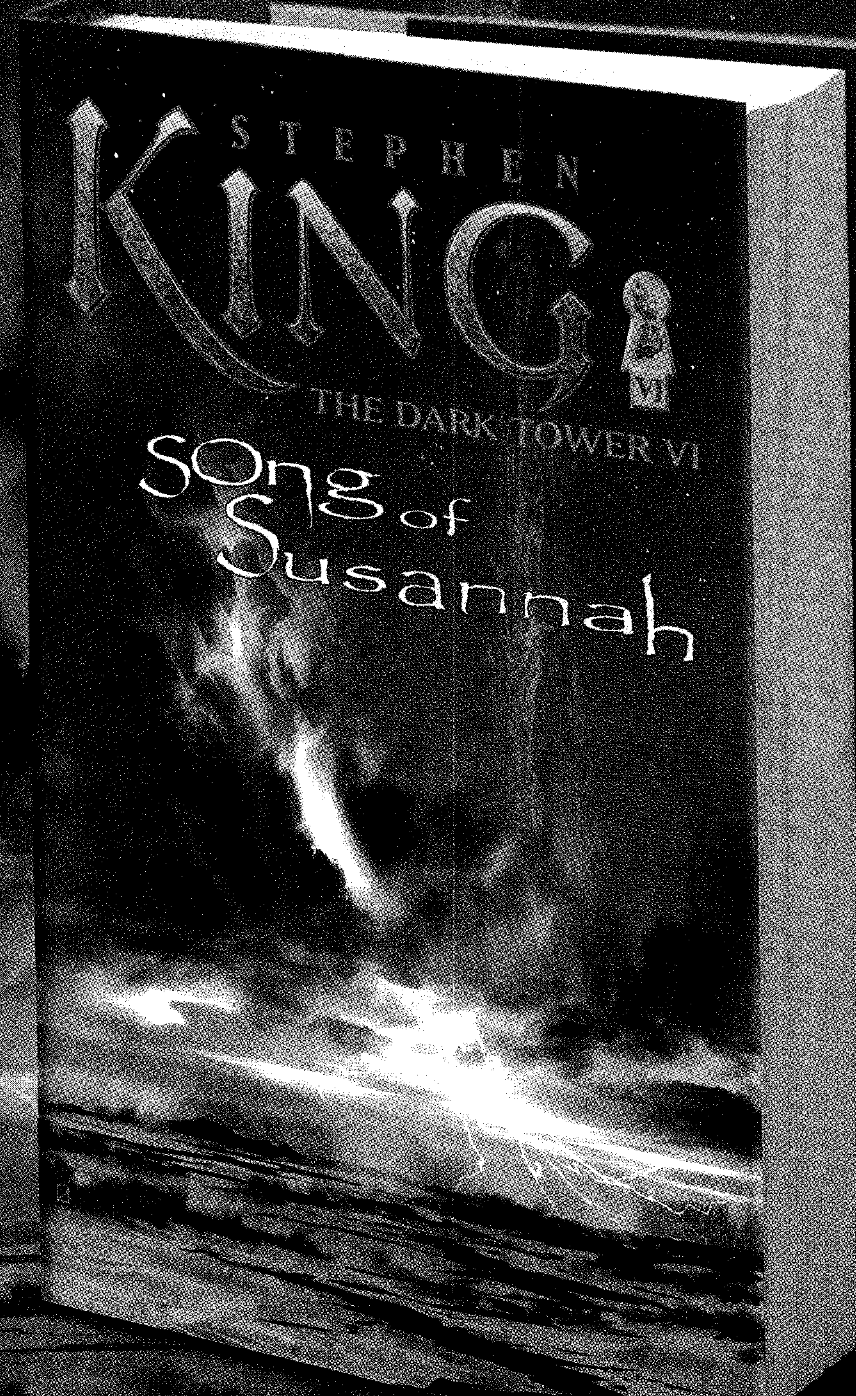
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Also available as an eBook and on CD and cassette from Simon & Schuster Audio • www.stephenking.com possible to tell which of them had come into a room. As for Cassady on amphetamine—he never ate, never slept, and never shut up. He also thought it a merry prank to slip several hundred micrograms of LSD into anything anyone happened to be ingesting. No one dared eat or drink without secure refuge from Neal. To cap off our Independence Day celebration, a number of us went into the village market and bought a suckling pig for roasting. Nothing roasted ever smelled lovelier to me than that substance-free pig as we settled under the palms with our paper plates and bottles of Pacifico. We were, unfortunately, deceived. Cassady had shot the creature in vivo with a hypo full of LSD, topped off with his choicest methedrine. After two forkfuls of *lechón*, we were bug-eyed, watching the Dance of the Diablitos, every one of us deep in delusion.

How the parrot survived its friendship with Cassady is beyond me; as far as I remember, neither he nor anyone else ever fed the bird. Twenty-five years later, on Kesey's farm, Janice and I woke to Neal's voice from the beyond. (The man himself had died by the railroad tracks outside San Miguel de Allende in 1968.) "Fuckin' Denver cops," he muttered bitterly. "They got a grand theft auto. I tell them that ain't my beef." We rose bolt upright and found ourselves staring into Rubiaco's unkindly green eye. If, as some say, parrots live preternaturally long lives, it must be time for some literary zoologist to cop that bird for the University of Texas Library Zoo.

The expatriation had to come to an end; Kesey would have to go back and answer to the State of California. In fact, his spell on the lam had been excellently timed. In 1966, the world, and especially California, was changing fast. The change was actually visible on the streets of San Francisco, at places like the Fillmore and the Avalon Ballroom. Political and social institutions were so lacking in humor and self-confidence that they crumbled at a wisecrack. The *Esquire* consciousness, however, held firm—they declined my copy. "For Christ's sake," an editor kept telling me, "tell it to a neutral reader." They thought I had gone native on the story, and of course I had been pretty native to begin with.

A few months later, Kesey crossed the border and went home. He was able to make a deal for six months at the San Mateo County sheriff's honor farm. No man can call another's prison time easy, but Kesey's was less bitter medicine than Cassady's two years at San Quentin. It was also an improvement on five years to life, a standard sentence on the books for a high-profile defendant at the time of Kesey's arrest.

Over the years, my friend Ken became a libertarian shaman. Above all, he loved performing; he loved preaching and teaching. He was a wonderful father, a fearless and generous friend, who always took back far less than he gave. All his life, he was searching for the philosopher's stone that could return the world to the pure story from which it was made, bypassing syntax and those damn New York publishers. He kept trying to find the message beyond the words, to see the words that God had written in fire. He travelled around sometimes, in successors to the old bus, telling stories and putting on improvised shows for crowds of children and adults. If he had chosen to work through his progressively revealed mythology in novels, rather than trying to live it out all at once, he might have become a writer for the age.

Life had given Americans so much by the mid-sixties that we were all a little drunk on possibility. Things were speeding out of control before we could define them. Those who cared most deeply about the changes, those who gave their lives to them, were, I think, the most deceived. While we were playing shadow tag in the San Francisco suburbs, other revolutions were counting their chips. Curved, finned, corporate Tomorrowland, as presented at the 1964 World's Fair, was over before it began, and we were borne along with it into a future that no one would have recognized, a world that no one could have wanted. Sex, drugs, and death were demystified. The LSD we took as a tonic of psychic liberation turned out to have been developed by C.I.A. researchers as a weapon of the Cold War. We had gone to a party in La Honda in 1963 that followed us out the door and into the street and filled the world with funny colors. But the prank was on us. ◆

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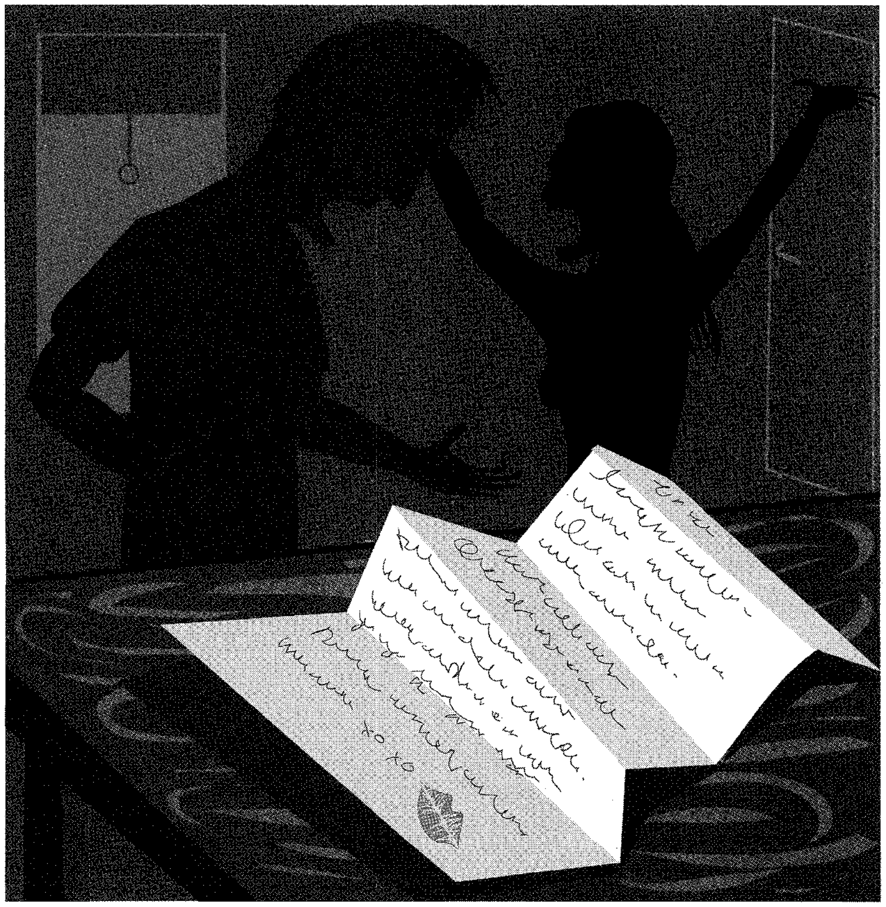
HOLIDAYS

HOMECOMING, WITH TURTLE

BY JUNOT DÍAZ



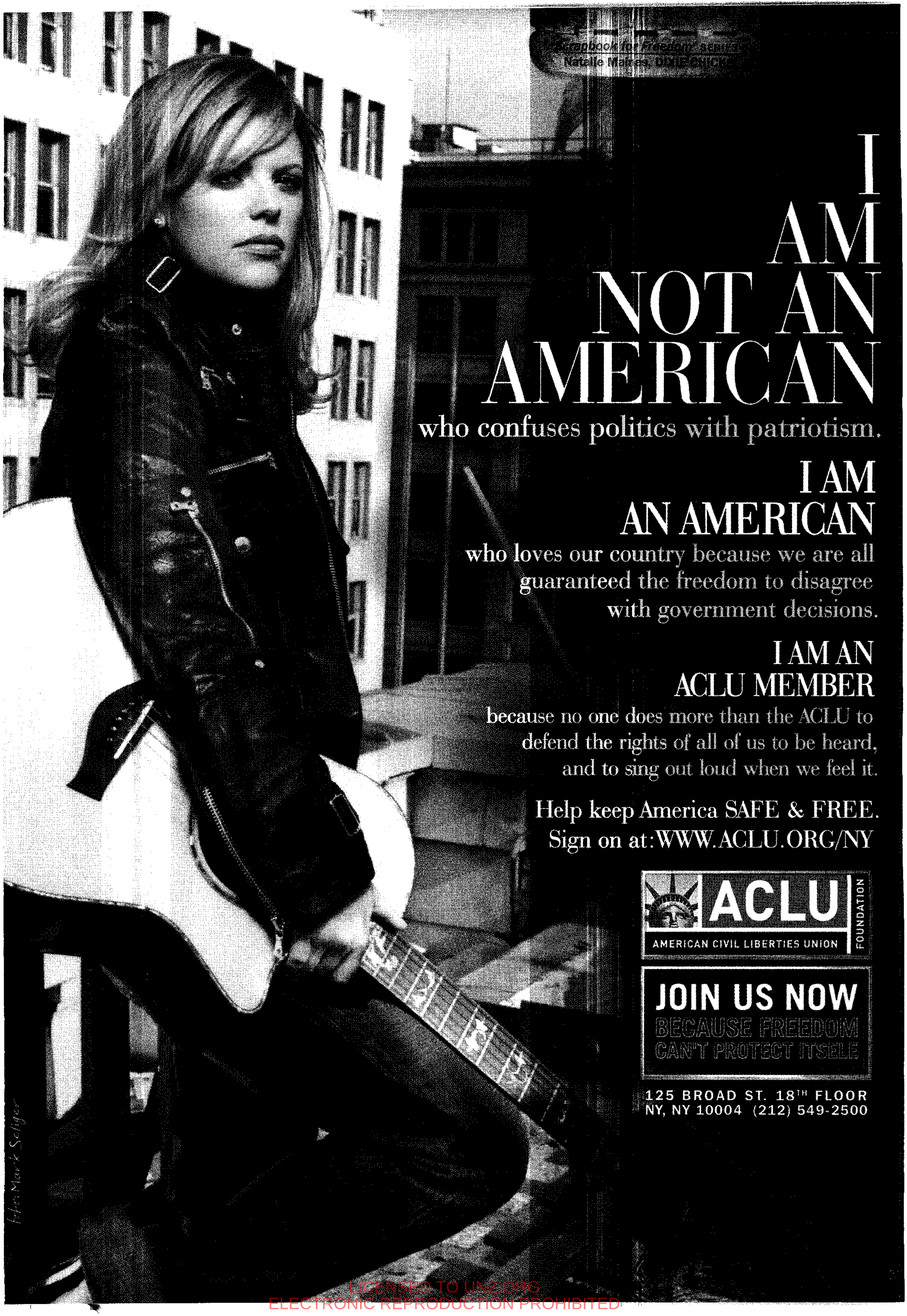
MAXIMILIAN BODE

That summer! Eleven years ago, and I still remember every bit of it. Me and the girlfriend had decided to spend our vacation in Santo Domingo, a big milestone for me, one of the biggest, really: my first time "home" in nearly twenty years. (Blame it on certain "irregularities" in paperwork, blame it on my threadbare finances, blame it on me.) The trip was to accomplish many things. It would end my exile—what Salman Rushdie has famously called one's dreams of glorious return; it would plug me back into that island world, which I'd almost forgotten, closing a circle that had opened with my family's immigration to New Jersey, when I was six years old; and it would improve my Spanish. As in Tom Waits's song "Step Right Up," this trip would be and would fix everything.

Maybe if I hadn't had such high expectations everything would have turned out better. Who knows? What I can say is that the bad luck started early. Two weeks before the departure date, my novia found out that I'd cheated on her a couple of months earlier. Apparently, my ex-sucia had heard about our planned trip from a mutual friend and decided in a fit of vengeance, jealousy, justice, cruelty, transparency (please pick one) to give us an early bon-voyage gift: an "anonymous" letter to my novia that revealed my infidelities in excruciating detail (where do women get these memories?). I won't describe the lío me and the novia got into over that letter, or the crusade I had to launch to keep her from dumping me and the trip altogether. In brief, I begged and promised and wheedled, and two weeks later we were touching down on the island of Hispaniola. What do I remember? Holding hands awkwardly while everybody else clapped and the fields outside La Capital burned. How did I feel? All I will say is that if you fused the instant when heartbreak occurs to the instant when one falls in love and shot that concoction straight into your brain stem you might have a sense of what it felt like for me to be back "home."

As for me and the novia, our first week wasn't too bad. In one of those weird details that you just couldn't make up, before leaving the States we had volunteered to spend a week in the Dominican Republic helping a group of American dentists who were on a good-will mission. We would be translating for them and handing them elevators and forceps and generally making ourselves useful. Even with the advantage of hindsight, I can't figure out why I thought this was a good way to kick off a homecoming, but that's just how we thought back then. We were young. We had ideals.

Our group of five dentists and five assistants treated roughly fourteen hundred kids from some of the poorest barrios in the city of La Romana (which is, ironically, the sugar capital of the D.R.). We weren't practicing the kind of dentistry that First Worlders with insurance are accustomed to, either; this was no-joke Third World care. No time or materials for fillings. If a tooth had a cavity, it would be numbed and pulled, and that was that. Nothing else we can do, our chief explained. That week, I learned more about bombed-out sixes, elevators, and cowhorns than a layperson should ever have to know. Of our group, only me and the novia could be said to speak any Spanish. We worked triage, calming the kids, translating for everybody, and still we had it easy, compared with the dentists. These guys were animals; they worked so hard you would have thought they were in a competition, but by the thousandth patient even their hands started to fail. On the last day, our chief, an immensely compassionate Chinese-American with the forearms of a major-league shortstop, was confronted with one extraction he just couldn't finish. He tried everything to coax that kid's stubborn molar out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of its socket, and finally he had to call over another dentist, and together they pulled out a long bloody scimitar of a six. During the ordeal the twelve-year-old patient never complained. ¿Te duele? we asked every couple of minutes, but he would shake his head fiercely, as though the question annoyed him.

Tu eres fuerte, I said, and that might have been the first sentence I had conjugated correctly all week.

No, he said, shaking his beautiful head, no soy.

Of course, we fought, me and the novia—I mean, the needs of the pueblo aside, I had just been bagged fucking some other girl—but it was nothing too outrageous. For one thing, we were too busy wrenching teeth. It wasn't until the mission was over and the dentists had packed their bags and we had headed out into the rest of the island that our real troubles began.

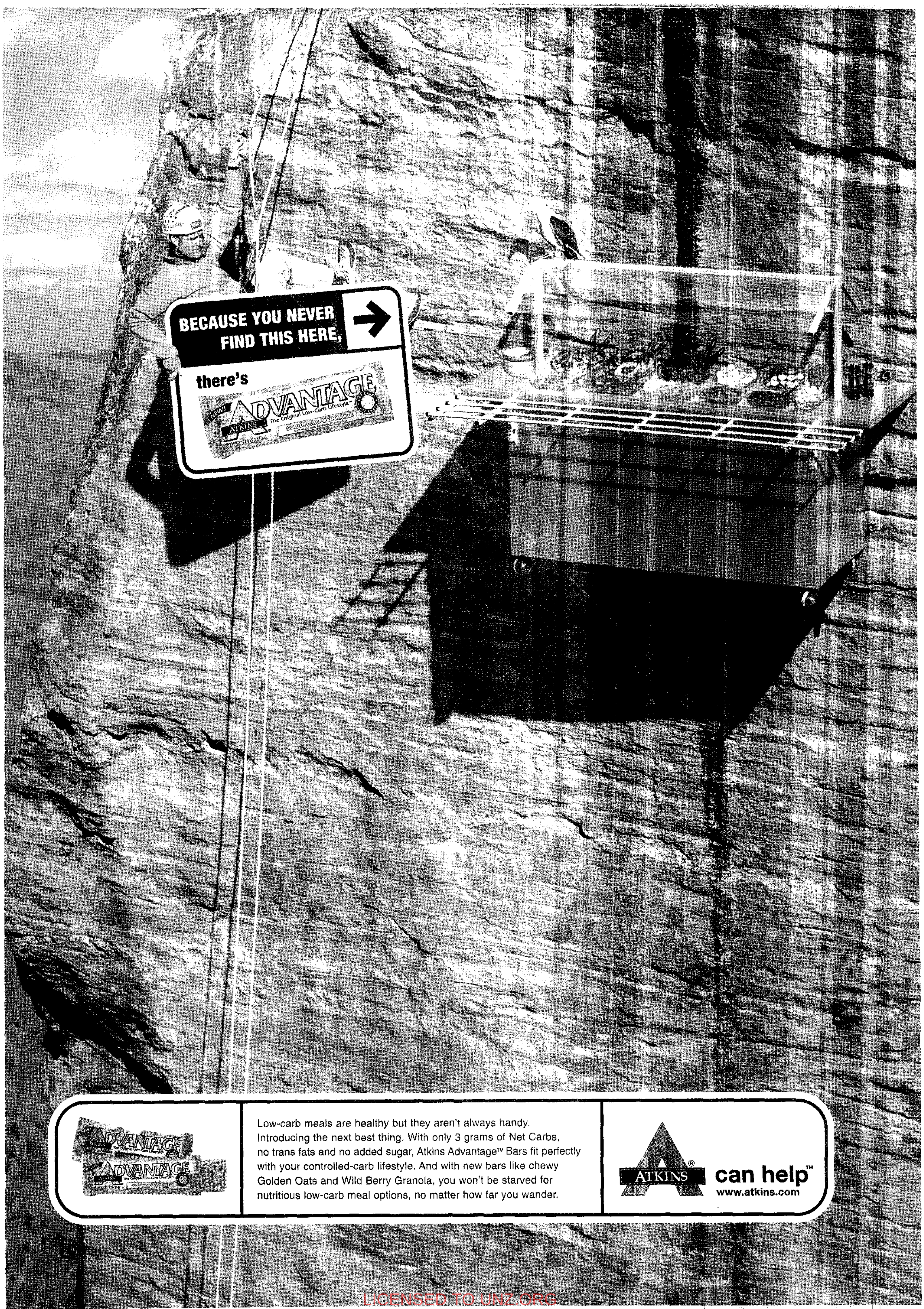
I don't know what I was thinking. Travelling the Third World is challenging enough as it is, but try it with a girlfriend who is only just realizing how badly she's been hurt and a boyfriend who is so worried that he no longer "fits in" at "home" that every little incident and interaction is sifted for rejection, for approval—a boyfriend who is so worried about his busted-up Spanish that he fucks up even more than normal. What I wanted more than anything was to be recognized as the long-lost son I was, but that wasn't going to happen. Not after nearly twenty years. Nobody believed I was Dominican! You? one cabdriver said incredulously, and then turned and laughed. That's doubtful. Instead of being welcomed with open arms, I was overcharged for everything and called un americano. I put us on all the wrong buses. If there was money to lose, I lost it; if there was a bus to catch, I made us miss it, and through some twist of bad luck all my relatives were in the States for the summer. The one relative we did manage to locate, a great-aunt, had been feuding with my moms since 1951, when Mami had accidentally broken her only vase, and my arrival signalled a new stage in the age-old conflict: each morning, she blithely served me and the novia sandwiches completely covered in fire ants.

Now that we didn't have the dentists to hold us back, we basically went off the deep end. We fought about everything: where to eat, what town we should visit, how to pronounce certain words in Spanish. We fought our way across the country: from La Capital to San Cristóbal to Santiago to Puerto Plata and back. It was miserable. If one of us wasn't storming off down the road with a backpack, the other one was trying to hitch a ride to the airport with strangers. Our craziness culminated one night in a hotel in Puerto Plata when the novia woke up and cried out, There's someone in the room! If you've never heard those words being shouted into your dreams, then yours has been a blessed life. I woke in a terrible fright and there he was—the intruder we'd all been waiting for.

It's at a crossroads like this that you really learn something about yourself. There was someone in the room with us, and I could have done any number of things. I could have frozen, I could have screamed for help, I could have fled, but instead I did what my military father had beaten into us during his weekend toughening-up exercises: no matter what the situation, always attack. So I attacked. I threw myself with a roar at the intruder.

It wasn't a person, of course. The intruder was a sea-turtle shell that had been cured and waxed and mounted on the wall. For the sake of national honor, I can say that I acquitted myself well in the battle. I smashed my head clean through the shell, struck the concrete wall, and bounced back to the floor. But instead of staying down I went back at him again, and only then did I realize I was punching décor.

That was the end. A couple of days later, we returned home, defeated, she to New Jersey, me to upstate New York. There was no miracle reconciliation. For a couple of lousy months, the relationship dragged on to its inevitable conclusion, like the heat death of a universe, until finally, having had enough of me, she found herself a new man who she claimed spent more money on her than I did. You're cheap, she asserted, even though I'd used a travel grant and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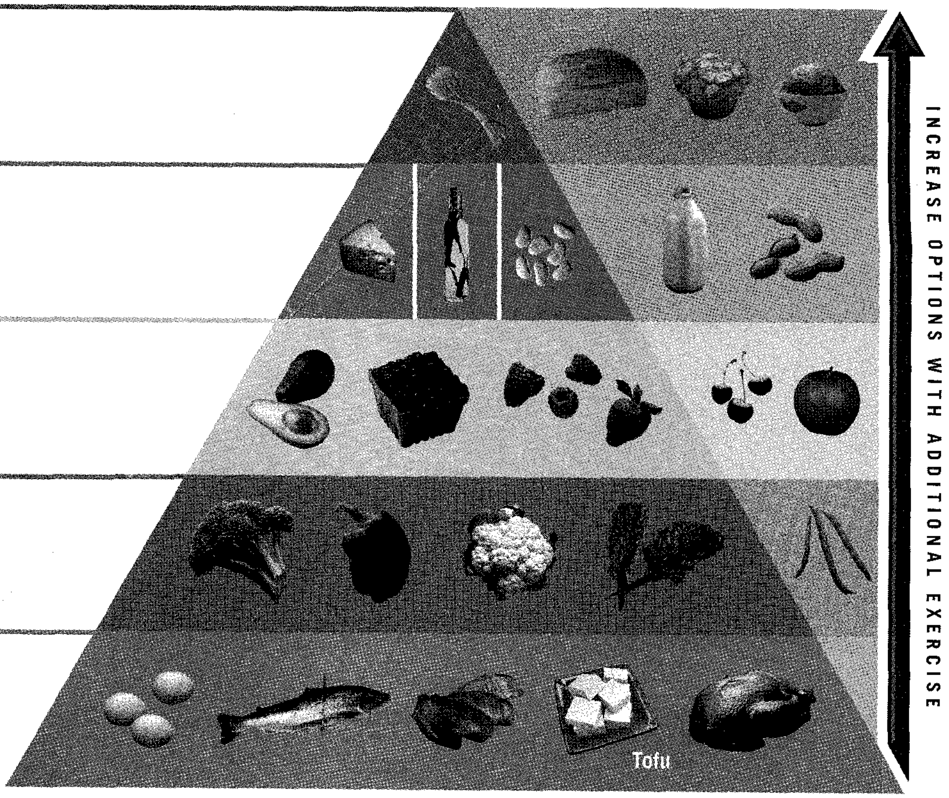
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all my savings to pay for our trip. She broke my heart, that girl did, which was a fair trade, considering that I'd broken hers first. But in the end none of it mattered. Even though a dead turtle had kicked my ass, even though my girlfriend had dumped me and a family member had tried to poison me with fire ants, even though I was not granted a glorious return by my homeland, I wasn't entirely crushed. Turned out I wasn't all that easy to crumb; before the year was out, I was back in the D.R., trying again. I kept going back, too. I had committed myself to the lucha, much as I had committed myself to that fight with the damned turtle.

These days, I get around Santo Domingo pretty easily (Los Tres Brazos? La Pintura? Katanga? Capotillo? No sweat), and most people will at least concede that I have some Dominican in me. My Spanish has improved to the point where I can hold forth on any subject—animal, vegetable, mineral—with only one major fuckup per sentence. I'm sure if you'd shown me that future during those last days of my trip with the novia I would have laughed at you. But even in the midst of the rubble there were signs; even on that last day, at the airport, I was still trying to pick my stupid self off the floor. My head was throbbing from the tortugal beat-down, and my nose felt as if it had only recently been reattached. (When I got home, my roommate blurted out, without so much as a hello, Fool, what the hell happened to you?) I was beat, truly beat, and, just in case I hadn't got the point, there was nothing cold to drink at the airport. But that didn't stop me from engaging in the debates that were going on all around me regarding the recent election and Santo Domingo's eternal President Balaguer—blind, deaf, and dumb but still jodiendo el pueblo. A present that the United States gave our country after its last military occupation, in 1965—God bless them all! Just before our flight was called, I was asked by a group of locals what I thought of Balaguer. I went into fulmination mode, and said he was a murderer, an election thief, an apologist of genocide, and, of course, a U.S. stooge of the Hosni Mubarak variety.

See, the newspaper seller announced triumphantly. Even the gringo knows. ♦

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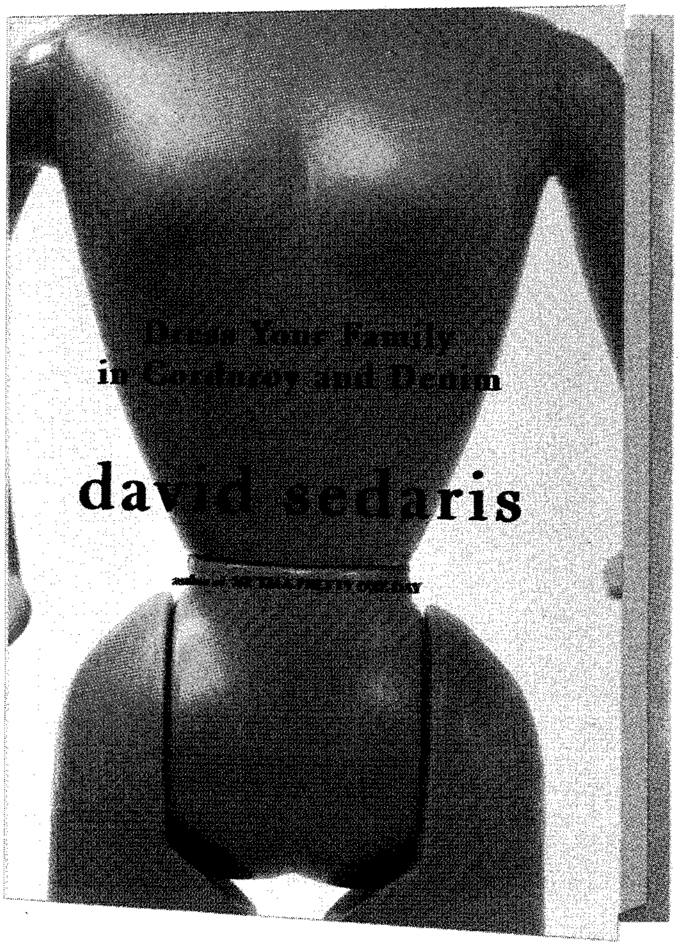

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FICTION

SZMURA'S ROOM

BY ALEKSANDAR HEMON

He stands at Szmura's door, his left hand suspended in midair, reluctant to knock. Flanked by two suitcases, one of which is held together by a flayed rope, he is panting, out of shape and undernourished. He is clad in a dark coat, the collar striated with lint and dandruff, the sleeves tragicomically short, exposing his dirt-rimmed shirt cuffs. When Mike Szmura opens the door, wearing nothing but pajama bottoms and a front of frightening chest hair, Bogdan utters his lines in stuttering English. "Right off the boat," Szmura says in a maliciously nasal voice and steps aside to let our boy enter the apartment, the roped suitcase banging at his ankles, the other one smashing against Szmura's knee.

At least, that is how Szmura described it to us later, exhibiting the obscure, alleged bruise on his knobby knee. We had interrupted our poker game (my two jacks were waiting to lure Szmura and Pumpek into surrendering their weekly income) so that Szmura could use his meagre narrative talents to depict and embellish Bogdan's arrival. The other players—Pumpek and a couple of Realtor buddies he'd brought along to serve as suckers—were unabashedly American, and they waited impatiently for Szmura to finish so the game could go on. But, in a likely attempt to distract me from the game, Szmura added, "He is from your lousy country, *Basnia*, whatever you call it." My two jacks promptly responded to the insult, and by the time I had raked in the loot with both hands I had forgotten all about the forlorn foreigner at Szmura's door.

At subsequent poker games, I learned more. Szmura attempted to entertain us with a repertoire of dumb-foreigner acts and bad-accent jokes featuring Bogdan, and from these performances I gathered that Bogdan was much like me, an oddity: a Ukrainian from Bosnia, although, unlike me, he was not from Sarajevo. Szmura had no interest in internal Bosnian cultural differences and presupposed that there was a deep, essential kinship between us, which is to say that by mocking Bogdan he was making me the target. I preferred taking his money to taking exception—he had reached the point of writing promissory notes, and I kept them, as if they were love notes, even after he'd made good on them.

Bogdan had been delivered to Chicago through some lamentably narrow refugee channel—a Ukie priest knew a Ukie priest who knew about a cheap room at Szmura's. The size of a closet, the room was in the apartment that Szmura rented from his ex-girlfriend's grandmother, who blissfully decided to ignore the fact that Szmura had permanently and irreversibly dumped the apple of her eye shortly after banging her.

As small as the room was, it echoed with emptiness. Bogdan parked his suitcases flat in the windowless corner, took a sheet and a blanket out of the unroped one, and spread them under the murky window—unequipped with mattress or duvet, this was where he would sleep. The room resembled an installation in a vacuous art gallery: the reflection of the ceiling bulb on the wood floor signifying the false surface of existence, the felled suitcases embodying the transitory nature of life—or, more specifically, the life of the subject, shrimped up in the corner against a bare, mispainted wall. Naturally, it was all very funny. During another poker game at Szmura's (which I missed), everyone

SYLVIA PLACHY, "MAN'S PORTRAIT IN LACE" (2002)/JUNE BATEMAN GALLERY

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filed into Bogdan's chamber and found the installation uproariously amusing: they guffawed to the verge of retching and fell to the existential floor, while Bogdan sat in his corner, perplexed by all the wisecracks about his artsy-fartsiness.

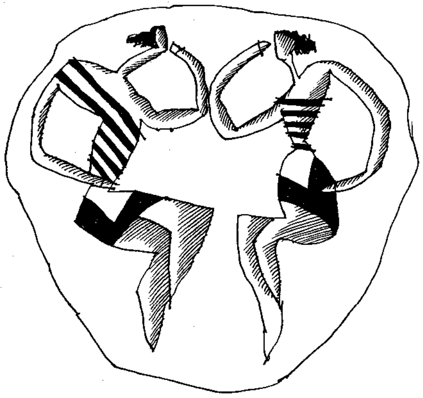
He did eventually get an official tour of the apartment—an introduction to the Szmura world and its impenetrable mysteries. In the living room, with a sweeping movement of his hand, Szmura offered his furniture to Bogdan's eye: the crimson sofa, with its wide U shape and stern, flat armrests—for some reason, Szmura referred to it as "the Puerto Rican"—and the claret velvet armchair facing it over a pseudo-Oriental coffee table, all Chinese curves and Japanese angles. Bogdan could peruse the Puerto Rican when Szmura was absent, he was told; otherwise the armchair was available. Next, Bogdan had to inspect the collection of objects on the mantelpiece, which consisted of an upright bullet casing that Szmura's venerable father had brought back from Vietnam; a glass ashtray full of foreign coins (mainly kopecks and zlotys); a bottle of Grolsch beer ("Be very careful," Szmura said, " 'coz this bottle is from Florida"); and a figurine of a sow, complete with swollen teats, that was left unmentioned. Bogdan also glanced out the window, which overlooked the same alley as the one in his room. There was nothing to see, of course, except a garage door inching downward like a stage curtain, and a few fallen deciduous leaves slipping inside before it closed.

In the bathroom, Bogdan was shown the hooks that Szmura used to hang his upper-body (navy blue) and lower-body (azure) towels and his carmine silk robe with a fire-breathing dragon on the back—Bogdan was assigned the fourth hook. He was also told that he must make a habit of lifting the toilet seat, should he put it down for the big dookie, and that he must never shave or piss in the shower. Finally, Szmura pushed a little jar into his face, its bottom lined with yellowish mites—this was where Szmura collected the wormy stuff from his nose pores.

In the kitchen, Bogdan was warned that the mug inscribed with "Микола," its chipped brim adorned with traditional Ukrainian patterns, was never to be touched. The fridge contained a bowl of intensely red vine tomatoes ("they make the blood strong"), along with Szmura's black dress shoes on a tray; a plate of rotting shrimp; and a jar of Vaseline, which Bogdan could not fail to conclude was deployed for some form of self-abuse. They did not dwell long over the contents of the pantry. Suffice it to mention a large number of Shake 'n Bake boxes stacked up on the bottom shelf, and an impressive collection of Campbell's soup cans lined up in alphabetical order on the top two shelves: Shelf No. 1, from Asparagus to Minestrone; Shelf No. 2, from Mushroom to Vegetable. The soup was not for Bogdan, Szmura declared. Were he ever to open a can, he would have to replenish the collection the very same day. Concluding the tour, Szmura flung open the door of his own bedroom, and exposed briefly a darkness into which the light cut a lambent half-rhomboid. Bogdan was never to enter this room, not even if invited. "Think of it," Szmura said, "as a minefield."

Szmura, however, would often freely enter Bogdan's room, opening the door violently. He would launch into monolithic monologues welcoming Bogdan to this great country, which had been built by immigrants, including Szmura's own Ukrainian grandparents, who'd had to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and now had a condo in Orlando—which was great, because it meant that there was an opportunity for everybody in this country, even a fuckface D.P. like Bogdan. Bogdan could tell that Szmura enjoyed these speeches; he would stroke the hair coppice on his forearms as he spoke, as if petting himself.

Szmura's manner of door-opening was closely linked to his fantasies of becoming an F.B.I. special agent: he was an intern at a law office and watched "Cops" regularly, all in preparation for the F.B.I. entrance exam, which he would take as soon as he graduated from Loyola Law School. Bogdan was made privy to Szmura's F.B.I. fantasies after he unwisely agreed to a demonstration of a submission technique and quickly found himself on the floor, with Szmura's knee pressing against his jugular, his elbow and shoulder about to pop. "I could kill you, if I wanted to," Szmura said matter-of-factly before he let him go.



Szmura was also a note-leaver. Every morning, Bogdan would find on the kitchen table a note in a taut, wiry handwriting that corresponded somehow to the essence of Szmura: the letter "T" was like his body—straight, slim, angular. The notes occasionally welcomed him again ("Feel at home"), but more often they were directives ("Wash the damn dishes") or announcements ("Rent due Tuesday"). There were some that stretched themselves thin between nonsense and poetry ("The fireplace is not real"). When Szmura, abruptly and inexplicably, started writing them down in verse form, Bogdan began collecting them. One day, from the desert covering the ruins of Chicago, a rusty box full of faded patches of paper will be excavated, and some good archeologist will discover the soul of a perished civilization in these abstruse verses:

The door is either
Open or locked
I like
Locked

Or:

Your socks are all over
How many fucking feet do you have?
You are not alone here, buddy
Not alone

Predictably, Bogdan often retreated to his hollow room, lying in the dark, palpating the wall, as if looking for an escape tunnel. Szmura would sometimes bring home a woman—he had an unmistakable taste for the meretricious kind—and Bogdan would listen to their coital exchanges, which always seemed rehearsed, as though they were auditioning for a porn flick. She would implore Szmura to put his big dick inside her, and he would say, Oh yeah, so that's what you want, bitch, and she would say, Yeah, gimme your big dick, and he would say, Oh yeah, so that's what you want, bitch, and so it would go, until they approached the climax, when she would squeal in frequencies peculiar to the sound of a wet fin-

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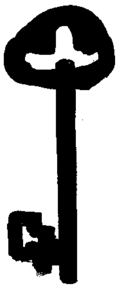
ger rubbing against glass, while Szmura would embark upon a volley of "fuck"s: fuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuck. He occasionally encouraged his sticky companions to stop by Bogdan's room and volunteer some secondhand erotic kindness. Only one of them actually did: wearing nothing but roller skates, a buxom part-time Wicker Park waitress purred kittenishly and scratched on his door. Unable to comprehend what was going on, frightened by the screeching of the roller skates on the floor, Bogdan didn't stir. The following morning, Szmura left a note saying, "It was a hit and run / Bo / That's all it was."

I do not know what Bogdan made of Szmura, or how aware he was of his insanity. Perhaps he was misled (as I had been) by Szmura's occasional human impulses: he bequeathed his Shake 'n Bake collection to the Ukie church, to be distributed to newly arrived immigrants; he was known to leave a tip even if the waitress was not fuckable; and one time he left a note saying, "If a bird flies in, let her out." Most misleading of all, I think, was the polite good-boy manner that Szmura employed when discoursing with Pany Mayska, his landlady.

The day after Bogdan moved in, Szmura took him across the hall and knocked at Pany Mayska's door, a nosegay of fragrant lilies in hand. They heard the slow shuffle of her feet, and Szmura said, "Now, be nice here. No talking out of your ass." He scowled and rescowled, raising his upper lip and distending his nostrils—a grimace that Bogdan would one day learn to recognize as threatening. Pany Mayska was puny, her face powdered and centered on a small, rouged mouth, her hair sparse, exposing the white streaks of her skull. She wore a pointy bra that might have been alluring half a century ago but now served as a scaffold for her cavernous chest. Szmura greeted her in Ukrainian and kissed her on the cheek, while she grabbed his lilyless hand and did not let him withdraw it, pulling him in. Her fingers were like claws, withered and twisted. Her apartment reeked of pee and pierogi, of cleanliness and ironed bedsheets. The smell travelled quickly through Bogdan's synapses until it reached the room where his grandmother had died: Ukrainian handiwork of the same geometric pattern multiplied on the tablecloth and the cushions; obsolete church calendars scattered around; a pensive etching of the poet Taras Shevchenko, glowering over his scrubby mustache; icons of bent-neck Virgins with chunky toddlers at their bosoms.

Szmura asked after Pany Mayska's health and she said it was fine—both of them all hearty smiles. Szmura might have slapped her on the back had it not been for her frailty. And how was Victor, her grandson? Oh, he was fine, uncovering ancient Slavic grave sites near Kharkiv. He'd be home by Christmas. And how was Oksana? Ah, she still didn't have a boyfriend. "Микола, I would have liked so much to have you as my grandson-in-law." "Пани Майска, I am too young to get married," Szmura said. She sighed pensively, as if Mike Szmura were the unfulfilled love of her own youth, her vanished dream.



Bogdan sat and listened with a general grin that suggested that he was interested but not prying. She stood up with creaking difficulty and reached for a bowl on the immaculately clean counter. When she put the bowl down on the table, it was full of crescent cookies. "And who are you?" she asked, pushing the bowl toward Bogdan. He gently jerked his head to express his willingness to taste a cookie, and then he told her who he was, with fatigued detachment, as if retelling the plot of a tedious Eastern European movie.

Szmura had told him that Pany Mayska used to work as a radiologist, taking X-rays of smokers' scorched lungs and the smashed hips of adventurous seniors. She was so fucking irradiated, Szmura said, that she glowed in the dark, bones coiling in her body, everything inside her rotting splendidly. Perhaps it was owing to her radioactivity that Bogdan could always sense her before she knocked at their door. He would sometimes reach the door before she had even opened hers. Through the peephole, he could see her wobble over with a plateful of pierogi. She knew that Szmura was at work during the day, but she always asked after Микола. She never agreed to come in, but she stood at the door and made Bogdan tell her, all over again, what he had told her the first time: that he was a Ukrainian from Bosnia, from a small town called Prnjavor; that he used to own a photo shop; that he had been forced to fight for the Serbs in the war and had escaped with nothing but the clothes he wore; and that he now worked at a Jewel supermarket, packing bags until he could find something better. After Bogdan had delivered his last line, she'd hand him the plate, covered with a flimsy serviette and decorated with the same Ukrainian pattern that dominated the rest of her habitat. Then she'd deliver her own lines in the following sequence:

(a) it was terrible what was going on in Bosnia; it reminded her of the Great Famine, when millions of Ukrainians died; she prayed that it would end soon;

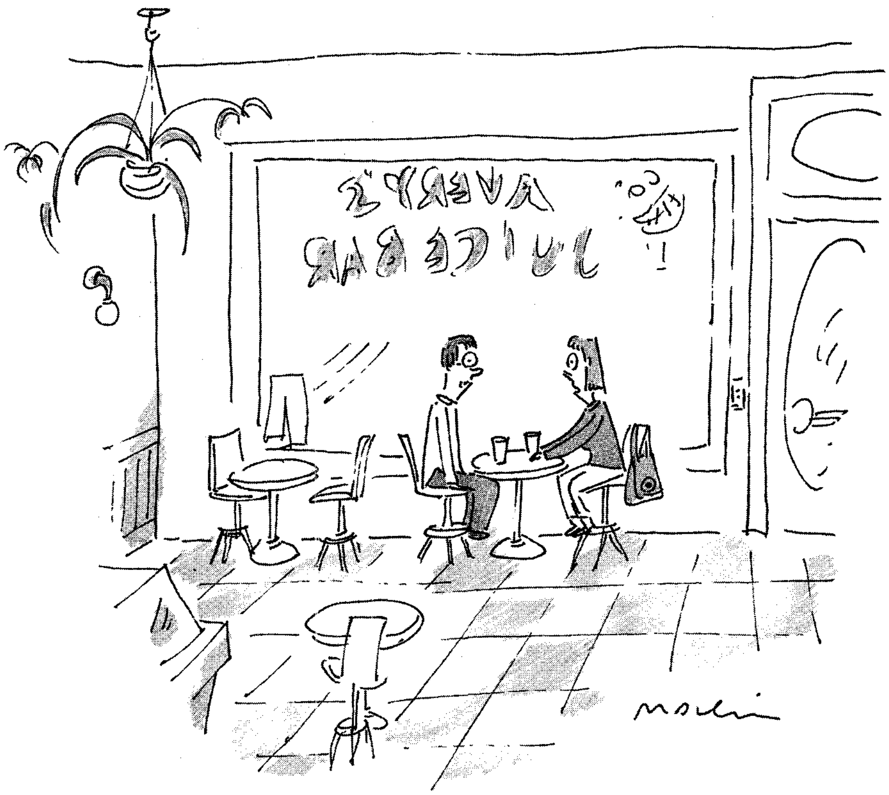
(b) did Bogdan ever think about all the places where Ukrainians could be found: we were everywhere, from Bosnia to the jungles of Uruguay; and

(c) Ukrainians were very visual people, people who liked pictures; take Disney, for example, who was one of us, a Дисни—he got his many ideas, his artistic inspirations, from Ukrainian national culture, and from our love of nature.

As rehearsed, Bogdan would extend his mouth into a serious smile and tighten his stomach muscles to suppress any laughter at the idea that Donald Duck was part of his heritage, that Goofy was Ukrainian. He grew to like Pany Mayska and her pastries, and he learned to bask in the glow of her radiation.

Since she had retired, she volunteered at the Museum of Ukrainian Culture and History, a funereal three-story building right across the parking lot from the Jewel where Bogdan worked. Once, I saw him wandering over there in a green apron and a cap that would have been fashionable in Eastern Europe decades ago. (I was pretty sure it was him; I hadn't met him yet, but the tired gait, more than anything else, gave him away.) Pany Mayska opened the door and waived the two-dollar entrance fee with an understanding nod. Bogdan stepped into a room suffused with a green darkness, its light dammed by heavy curtains.

She looked even smaller and more radiant in the sepulchral murk. Bogdan followed her, feigning interest, past painted wooden eggs and sallow bobbin-lace, his chest reverberating with sorrow. It all



“Would it be all right if I still called every once in a while, just to, y’know, scream at you?”

• •

made him think of the shabby armoire in his grandparents’ bedroom, which he had dug through as a child, in search of the creased photos from their childhood. Pany Mayska ascended the stairs to a room that told, she said, the story of our people. The room was curtainless, with dust particles floating all around as the sunlight blazed outside. She pointed at a glass case under the window: a cracked bread trough, an eagle-shaped medal coated with psoriatic rust; a letter whose cursive was melting into bluish waves. Bogdan wondered whether the letter had been brought over from the old country or never sent back from this one. Then they walked along the walls, studying photos of ghastly, famine-wasted peasants lined up for the camera, as if for execution, and portraits of stiff, black-and-white men who had come over a long time ago, their eyes bulging as their tightly knotted ties cut off their airflow. Pany Mayska stopped in front of a picture of a pinheaded man with a thick mustache and round thin-rimmed glasses—this was her husband, she said, with a quiver in her voice. And then they went downstairs, to the small kitchen, where Bogdan accepted a glass of diluted raspberry concentrate, a bagful of almost expired TV dinners that she just happened to have lying around, and a report on how she had once caught Oksana and Szmura kissing, and they were only twelve years old!

I must confess that I waited in the Jewel’s parking lot with the intention of intercepting Bogdan. It was time, I thought, for us to meet. He reminded me a lot of myself, as I had been not so long ago: I, too, had had to deal with the conundrum of the Social Security number, with the recondite rules of baseball, and with the immutable laws of living with Szmura. I, too, had resisted the temptation to slurp Szmura’s soup and had accepted bags of TV dinners and dried Twinkies from Pany Mayska. Once, she had even lent me money, which I had never paid back—which was why I avoided her now, crossing the street whenever I saw her hobbling arthritically toward me.

When Bogdan stepped out of the museum, carrying a weighty paper bag, he appeared taller, clumsily hunched forward, much like Goofy. I accosted him close to the cart rack. It surprised me that he wasn’t surprised. He recognized me, he said—I looked like my cousin Roman, with whom he had gone to school back in Prnjavor.

I had practiced my lines. I had planned to inquire about his parents and offer him my generous help. I wanted to tell him to get the hell out of Szmura’s place as soon as he could. Instead, I found myself nodding meaninglessly, like a congenitally embarrassed American, to convey that he had my support and understanding, even if I could not comprehend what he was talking about. “You will never know what you escaped,” he said. “You will never know how lucky you are.” He told me how he had buried his parents in their back yard. He had been conscripted into the Serb Army and fought at Derventa. He had seen unspeakable things: people forced into minefields, pregnant women cut open, eyes gouged out with rusty spoons, his fellow-soldiers pissing into a mass grave. All he’d been able to think of was escaping, so much so that he had felt relief when his parents died—though I don’t know if he said this or I just inferred it. Jewel customers—young blond mothers, old men reeking of mothballs, drunks with paper-bagged Wild Irish Rose—were responsibly returning their carts to the rack. “It is painful to remember what I cannot forget,” he said, possibly quoting a Ukrainian song I did not know. So I made up an incontestably urgent task, expressed my eagerness to get together soon, offered unspecified help, and took off across the lot. After that, I avoided him for years.

“That museum, it creeps me out, man,” Szmura said, shuddering. “Why the fuck would Bo go there?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “Maybe it reminds him of home. Maybe he gets cozy with old Mayska.”

“Maybe you can write a nice story about that one day,” Pumpek said. “Right now, you gotta deal.”

“I don’t understand those people. That fucking old bitch has lived in this fucking country for fifty fucking years, and all she talks about is our people and the famine and Disney and fucking Ukraine,” Szmura said.

"Deal," Pumpek said.

"It is heartbreaking," I said. "All that sorrow."

"It is dick-breaking," Szmura said. "You know what the Ukie anthem is? 'Ukraine hasn't died yet.' Hasn't fucking died yet! Well, let it die, man. This is America, not a psychiatric, you know, facility."

"Deal," Pumpek said.

I dealt, to Szmura and Pumpek and the two real-estate guys, who said nothing, all gambling ice and calculation. One of them kept shuffling his chips while staring straight at me, obviously (and foolishly) designating me as the sucker. The other stood up and got himself a beer. I realized they were brothers.

"I am worried about Bo," Szmura said. "I want him to start living in America, stop living in the past. Those old vampires are not good for him. And he's not even from Ukraine, he's from fucking *Basnia*. I'm gonna take him under my wing. We gotta integrate him in this society."

"*Integrate*," the brother with the beer said all of a sudden. "Where'd you learn such a fancy word?"

And so Szmura took Bogdan under his vulture's wing. He gave him impromptu lessons in American history: he made him admire the big balls that graced the groins of the Founding Fathers; he narrated the great epic of saving the world from the freedom-hating menace, in several installments (Vietnam, Grenada, the Gulf); he encouraged him to watch television, to appreciate the richness of American culture; he painted the vast canvas of capitalism in a few simple strokes—free market, free enterprise, money in the bank.

One day, he invited Bogdan to sit in on a business meeting he was going to have with an acquaintance. Perhaps Bogdan was truly excited to learn something at the Szmura Institute of Integration, but it was more likely that it was much too complicated for him to say no. Besides, Szmura had offered to let him sleep, on weeknights, on the Puerto Rican couch.

"All I want you to do," Szmura said, "is to sit there and say nothing. If I start going after the guy, or grab him by the neck, stop me. I want you to stop me." He installed Bogdan on the Puerto Rican, and put a bottle of Jack Daniel's at the center of the coffee table and a bowl of cherry tomatoes next to it. He told Bogdan that the guy who was coming over needed a favor and that it was hard for him to say no, " 'coz the guy's father is the mayor of Springbrook." That, of course, did not sound particularly impressive to Bogdan, but before he could ask anything Szmura was off to the kitchen to get glasses. Light filtered through the whiskey bottle and an ochre penumbra flickered on the table.

"Everyone knows that Springbrook is a Mob town," Szmura yelled from the kitchen. "This guy's dad has, you know, connections, and they could be useful when I'm with the F.B.I."

Naturally, Bogdan was uneasy at the idea of being caught between the Mob and the F.B.I., but he was titillated, too, as anyone would be. When the bell rang, he leaned back in the Puerto Rican, crossed his legs, intertwined his fingers over his stomach, and tried to relax his face so it would appear sullen and cold. Szmura walked in with a tall, skinny dude in a baseball hat, seated him in the armchair, and sat next to Bogdan, whom he introduced as his "friend and associate." Jack was poured (by Bogdan); thoughts on certain celebrity chicks and their fake tits were exchanged. The skinny dude was sweating, and Szmura was spreading his arms across the back of the Puerto Rican, his forearm touching the back of Bogdan's head. He and the skinny guy both glanced at Bogdan at the same time, as if he were a conduit for an encoded transmission.

"Tell me, Michael," Szmura finally said. "How can I help you?"

"Here's my problem," Michael said, "and I don't want you to misunderstand my position here."

Bogdan felt the intense presence of Szmura and Michael in the room; he smelled their semi-criminal arousal, and everything, everything decelerated. There was a woman, Michelle. She was a great, fantastic chick, and Michael sort of loved her. (Bogdan imagined her: tall, graceful, and pensive.) But she had been having a bit of a drug problem. It had started out in college; a little pot, some E, occasionally some hard stuff, but only on weekends and holidays, when everyone else was doing it. (He saw a dark basement thumping with degenerate music, youths slumped in the corners, the whites of their eyes webbed with blood.) Michael himself had dropped it all, owing to his baseball and all, and he'd been working real hard—no booze, no drugs, just clean pussy. There had been some interest from minor leagues, pretty serious, too, the Cubs' stable team, no less, a lot of money in the offing, a lot. Michelle, though, had not quit partying. She swore she got high only on weekends, but then Michael found out from a buddy of his that she was, in fact, doing shitloads of drugs. She had been fucking her dealer, too, his buddy said, so Michael confronted her. (Bogdan envisioned a soundless screaming match, tears pouring off her round cheeks.) She was sorry and shit, but she admitted that she was full-hooked on coke and she owed a lot of money to her dealer, some cultural-studies creep. He had forced her to fuck him. (A closeup of a woman's hand against a hairy back.) Michael went and talked to the creep, told him to fuck off. But the multi-culti motherfucker wanted his money back. He was entitled to it, he had earned it, and he had some pretty big ass-whupping friends. Michael was afraid that he might force Michelle to fuck other guys to pay the debt. (A tableaux of panting, unctuous bodies, limbs entangled like mating snakes.)

"I hear ya," Szmura said. "So you wanna pay him off?"

"Yeah," Michael said. He needed to clean up the mess; he needed to put his money where his dick was. Otherwise, it would fuck up his baseball career, and baseball was his life. Bogdan did not entirely understand all this, but the grandeur of Michael's dilemma did not escape him.

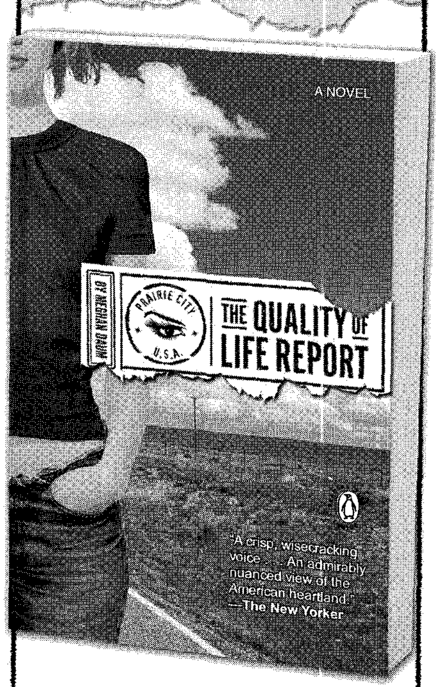
"There's plenty of pussy in the sea," Szmura said.

"I am afraid I like to swim in my own pool."

"Why don't you talk to your dad?"

"My family is not known for sensitivity," he said. "I just wanna pay the motherfucker and get my woman off his dick. I'd love to have his limbs scattered all over rural Illinois, but I gotta be realistic."

Szmura looked at Bogdan, as if tele-



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pathically consulting with him. "Twenty-five per cent," he said. "Standard rate among friends. How much do you need?"

"Ten Gs."

"I'll have the money for you tomorrow, and a promissory note to sign, too."

"I'll sign whatever you want me to."

"Fantastic," Szmura said with a snort of approbation. He grabbed a handful of tomatoes and popped them, one by one, into his mouth.

"Don't take this personally, Michael," he said, "but I feel that it is my professional obligation to mention that I would have to take measures, you know, should you fail to make a scheduled payment. I might, for one, have to talk to your dad."

"Understandable," Michael slurred.

"And for the sake of my business image"—he glanced at Bogdan, who beamed with voyeuristic trepidation—"I might have to punish you. Nothing big, certainly not enough to endanger your baseball career, but I'm gonna have to send Bo here to address the problem."

"Understandable," Michael said, and looked at Bogdan, who, out of discomfort, folded his hands into fists—doubtless looking to Michael as if he were preparing to smash his face in.

"Bogdan here," Szmura said, "is from *Basnia*. There was a war there, horrible stuff. He has seen things that you and I cannot begin to imagine. They slice people up over there like fucking kielbasa. So he is a little troubled, if you get what I mean. He's a bit beyond therapy. But I'm sure he'll be able to control himself, now that he knows you."

Here Bogdan fully assumed his role: he flexed his neck; he grinned at Michael, and his left incisor sparkled with the menace of a war criminal. Then he muttered, "Yes," in a deep, Slavic voice, and grabbed a couple of tomatoes. Szmura leaned back into the Puerto Rican and spread his legs triumphantly, as if to exhibit the size of his testosterone-choked testicles.

A few days later, spring parachuted into Chicago: the air was abruptly warm and fragrant, the grass was suddenly green, as if it had been painted overnight. Bogdan started growing a mustache and dreamed of buying a camera. He established an after-work ritual that involved lounging on the Puerto Rican, reading the weather forecast ("Mild with gusty morning T-storms. Clear skies in the afternoon") while sipping a thimbleful of Jack on the rocks. His life began to contain small, repeatable pleasures.

Szmura even took him out for drinks once, to the Rainbo Club, no less, where they would have picked up two redheaded sisters, had it not been for Bogdan's reticence. I watched them, from the far corner, where I was partly hidden behind an excitable pinball machine, as Szmura did the charming, while Bogdan stared at his almost empty glass—he avoided finishing the drink because he couldn't afford to buy a round. He didn't say a word, just kept looking up at one of the sisters (her name was Julia) and smiling sheepishly. Szmura kept buying drinks, and finally he delivered his killer pickup line: "When you get fucked up, we can take you home." Such boldness had worked for him before, but this time the sisters just stood up and left, Julia bestowing a parting glance at Bogdan, which Szmura interpreted as an invitation to a fuckfest.

Bogdan spent the night taking long imaginary walks with Julia, holding her imaginary hand, but didn't, in the end, dare to imagine making love to her on the spine-twisting Puerto Rican. Dawn arrived with a fanfare of chirruping sparrows, and Bogdan passed out under the weight of what could very loosely be called happiness.

He woke up late and scratched his stomach and buttocks for a while, yawning. He sauntered over to the kitchen and poured himself a cup of the feeble coffee that Szmura had kindly prepared. Then he read the note that Szmura had left on the table. He stood up to add cream to his coffee, then read it again, and this time he understood what it meant:

I am afraid, Bo,
You gonna have to go
I need your room
Michael is bringing Michelle
Pussy protection program
Pay what you can
And leave

In Bosnia, there is a typically cruel and precise idiom that is used to describe the behavior and movement of a frightened person—such an individual is said to act like a beheaded fly. Here was the headless Bogdan flying to his room to take off his pajamas, then collapsing on the Puerto Rican to stare for a long time at the unreal fireplace. Finally, he made it back to his room to put on his Jewel uniform, and then he headed for the pantry, as if looking for a place to hide. There he found himself facing the soup collection, despair grinding through his bowels. He read every label carefully, examined each can—but Asparagus remained stubbornly silent, Onion and Split Pea regarded him with hatred, and he had no choice but to put his faith in the strength of Tomato. He poured what resembled congealed blood into a pot and waited for a blistery boil to break the surface. He ravenously slurped up the potion, while reading the note again, his blue shirt sprinkled with drops of red.

Pany Mayska's radiation enveloped him before he had even knocked at her door. When she appeared, wearing slippers with pompoms at the end of their curled tips, as if she were an aging princess from Baghdad, he told her about Szmura's note. She pressed her hand against her chest and gasped, acknowledging the imminence of hurt and humiliation. But she said she believed that Микола had only done what he had to do; he meant well, and it was a very small room anyway. Bogdan wanted her dried lips against his cheek; he wanted her to hold his perspiring hand and comfort him, as his grandmother would have, but she stood away. She offered to let him stay at the museum—there was an empty room in the back—until he figured something out. A cloudlet of boiled-dough smell wafted out of her apartment, and Bogdan had the heart-wrenching feeling that he was saying goodbye to her. She gasped understandingly again, and withdrew back into the darkness of her home.

The door to Szmura's room was as heavy as cast iron, as if it led to a dungeon. Bogdan entered, fully aware that once he was inside there would be no turning back. He saw a dishevelled bed, a scree of comforter in the center, a head crater in the pillow. A full beaker of water stood by the bed, bubbles pressed against its glass wall. A tie stretched across the chair, like a severed tendon. The digital clock hysterically flashed 12:00. A book ("Chicken Soup for the Baseball Fan's Soul") spread its wings on the floor. From under the bed, a pair of stolid twenty-pound dumbbells protruded just enough for Bogdan to stub his big toe. In the closet, suits were lined up, in a spectrum of colors from azure to navy; below the suits, Szmura's shoes stood in an impeccably slanted row, like cars in a parking lot. The underwear occupied different shelves: the boxers on the top, the jockeys on the bottom, the undershirts in the middle, precisely aligned in stacks.

On the wall above Szmura's desk hung a map of Florida, with an inset of the Keys. On the desk there were piles of inscrutable papers; pencil shavings (calling up the smell of school in Prnjavor: pencils, the wet eraser sponge, and girls' freshly washed hair); a computer monitor in which Bogdan could see a bent reflection of himself; a tin cookie box containing baseball cards, fluorescent condoms, a pouch of pot. In the drawer, a black ball of socks; a grotesquely orange orange; a roll of twenty-dollar bills. Bogdan unrolled it and counted the money: twenty-three hundred dollars—he took eighty, then rolled it back up. There was a holstered .38-calibre gun in another drawer, loaded and heavy. He unlocked it and pointed it at the window. *Bang. Bang.* He put the barrel in his mouth: it tasted metallic, bitter and sweet.

A tongue of paper was hanging out of the fax machine: "Stock Alert!" and a confirmation from South Beach Heaven, "An Escort Service You Can Trust." In the garbage can, he found a drawing of a dog humping a smiley face with the inscription "Fuck Ya!" On the windowsill, a rotten cactus perched over a pile of photos, almost all featuring Szmura with a multicolored cocktail in his hand, surrounded by a choir of sunny young men and women. At the bottom of the pile, there was a sallow photo of a boy sitting sideways on a luge, his wool-capped head deposited despondently on his knees, surrounded by flat whiteness. Bogdan recognized the soporific sadness of the boy, the feeling of being stuck outside in the cold when one wanted to be inside, at home and warm.

He was folding the photo to put it in his pocket when Szmura charged across the room, leaping over the bed, and blew Bogdan's left eye right out of the socket with his first punch. ♦

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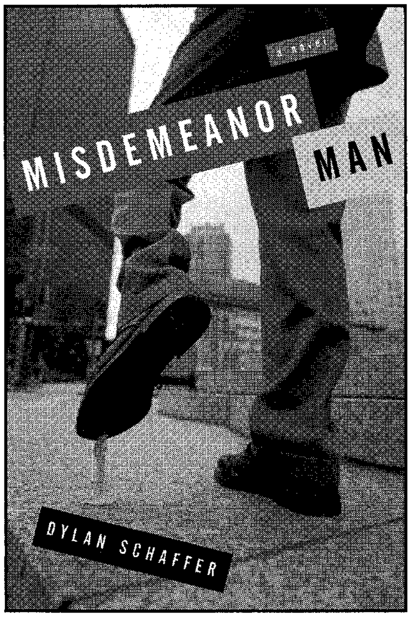

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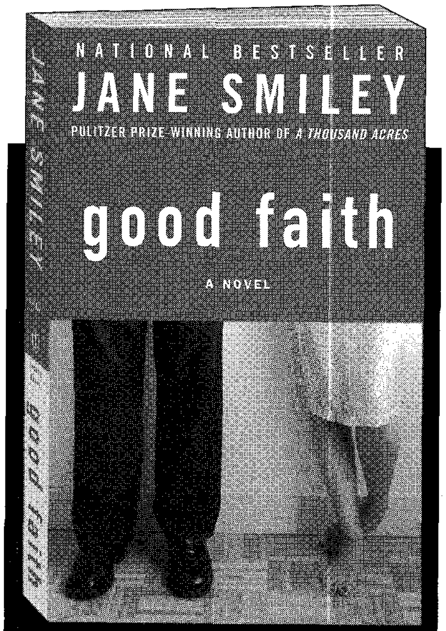

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HOLIDAYS

NIGHTTIME IN THE POOL

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE

Student days, summer in the Tropics. We were four: me and my wife, my wife's sister, Linda, and Linda's husband, Scottie. For a month, we had been travelling in Belize and Guatemala, having taken the bus from Belize City through Belmopan and up across the hills to Tikal, where we wandered the ruins and gawked at the wildlife. Coatimundis, howler monkeys, agouti pacas, a black leathery armadillo no bigger than my foot—I was so excited that I got lost in the jungle and blundered into a Mayan village where neither English nor Spanish held any currency, and I had to rely on sign language before I was able to discover the ruins all over again. So what if I wore a fine fur of malarial mosquitoes at all times? So what if my intestinal tract had been so thoroughly scoured I couldn't hold down even a grain of rice? There was Lomotil. And there was rum (twenty-five cents a shot for Bacardi in Belize City; fifteen for the local product, distributed in bottles gone opaque from a thousand rinsings).

In Flores, on Lago Petén Itzá, we were offered beds in the straw of a stable, and I spent one night in a cot on the veranda of a hotel in a dark mass of undifferentiated strangers while the patrons of the bar edged past me to use the facilities. Then it was back on the bus and up over the hills and down again to Belize City, with its dead dogs and open sewers and the residuum of decay. Fun. All fun. Every minute of it. Did it matter that the hotel, one of the cheapest in town, was situated just across from the insane asylum, where day and night the inmates pressed their faces against the iron bars and moaned and shook and shouted unintelligibly? Or that Scottie and I suffered sun poisoning as a result of snorkeling off Caye Caulker (and staggered through the streets on legs so swollen that people stopped us to ask what drugs we were on and could they possibly acquire some for themselves)? Not a whit. This was a vacation and vacations were fun.

Still, we were long-haired, ragged, dirty, hungry, and as wrung out with experience as four old gym towels. We were looking forward to going north, to Mexico, where we would spring for a real hotel and a little luxury by way of compensation for all the rough—but illuminating—living we'd been doing. The bus moved slowly, fitfully, an antique thing of cobbled parts, the road beneath it a broad, humped plain of dirt hemmed in by trees. I no longer recall how we passed the time—hunched over dissolving paperbacks, I suspect, suffering gastric distress and awaiting the outcome. We made one pit stop—there was a store, a thatched shack that served as the ladies' lavatory, a profound and immense tree that served as the men's—and then we passed through Orange Walk, Caledonia, and Corozal, the vision of Mexico glowing in our minds. It was night when we arrived at the border. Ahead of us lay Chetumal, in Quintana Roo, a place that shimmered with light, a place where there was electricity, where there were taxis, paved roads, restaurants, hotels; behind us was the jungle, black and implacable.

I should point out that my wife has Hungarian blood, and this, as much as anything, makes her contentious. She did not want to pay the *mordida* that the stereotypical border guard demanded—*¿Ustedes no tienen visas?*—and I had to take her by the arm and frog-march her out of the customs building to stand in the darkness for a few moments before she could begin to compare the advantages of paying a few pesos for progress and clean sheets as opposed to the alternative, viz., sleeping in the dirt (or, rather, the mud) of the jungle. She took my point.

And so on to the city. Lights, automobiles, *la música y el ruido y la vida.* We had come back to civilization and we were deeply impressed. We ate; we drank; we splurged on a hotel. Our spirits rose. At the hotel—ancient stone and stucco, Saltillo tile, birds in an aviary—we were transported to find that there was a swimming pool. Here was a chance to shed some of the grit of the road, to feel at one with the essential element from which all life had emerged, to pump and thrash and—well, you get the picture. A pool! A hotel with a pool!

OTEL
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Unfortunately, there was very little light in the courtyard, and I could scarcely see where I was going. But, as my eyes adjusted to the darkness and my ears to the sounds of the city beyond the fence, I felt exuberant, abandoned, ready for anything. There was no sound of the in-suck and outflow of an operative filter, and that should have given me pause—and the water itself was tepid, faintly greasy, not at all what you'd want or expect—but I took the plunge. In the depths, the water struck me as strange—this was a swimming pool, after all, an amenity advertised by the man behind the desk, and why should the water seem so cluttered? So viscid? So unyielding? My enthusiasm was gone, but I hammered out a few laps anyway, just to enjoy the lightness of being, and then I went off to a sweltering bed and the drowsy metronome of an overhead fan.

In the morning, I ambled down to inspect the pool and made a number of overlapping discoveries, none of which was particularly pleasant. For one thing, the water was the color of a Granny Smith apple, and for another it looked as if it had never been filtered, not since the distant day when the pool was dug and the rains came to fill it. I bent low at the waist and peered into the depths. There seemed to be something down there, some subsurface architecture, which had served to collect and nurture the great long ropes of algae that gave the pool its distinctive color. But what was it? That was when I became aware of the shadows passing overhead and looked up to see eight or ten buzzards circling the area, in their industrious, keenly attentive way—and then I heard the squawking, the alarm call, the screech of chickens snatched to the slaughter. A short trip to the fence at the hotel's periphery cleared up the mystery—the slaughterhouse was next door, and even as that realization came to me the wind stirred the shed white feathers in its yard and lifted them to whirl high overhead and settle on the pool. ♦

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KNOPF

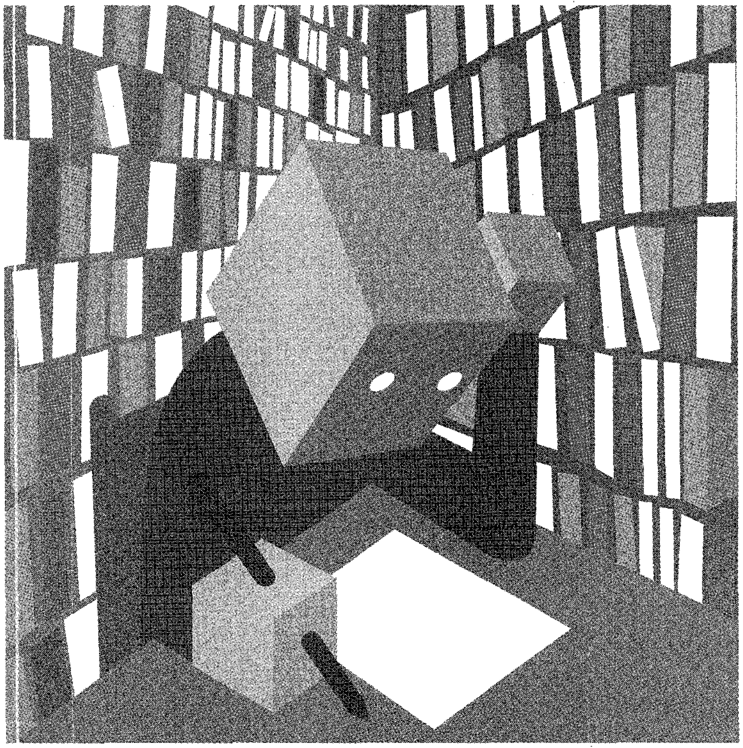
A CRITIC AT LARGE

BLOCKED

Why do writers stop writing?

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

“Yesterday was my Birth Day,” Coleridge wrote in his notebook in 1804, when he was thirty-two. “So completely has a whole year passed, with scarcely the fruits of a *month*.—O Sorrow and Shame. . . . I have done nothing!” It was true. Most of the poems for which he is remembered were written when he was in his mid-twenties. After that, any ambitious writing project inspired in him what he called “an indefinite indescribable Terror,” and he wasted much of the rest of his life on opium addiction. How could he have done this? Why didn’t he pull himself together? A friend asked him the same question. “You bid me rouse myself,” he replied. “Go, bid a man paralytic in both arms rub them briskly together, and that will cure him. Alas! (he would reply) that I cannot move my arms is my complaint.”



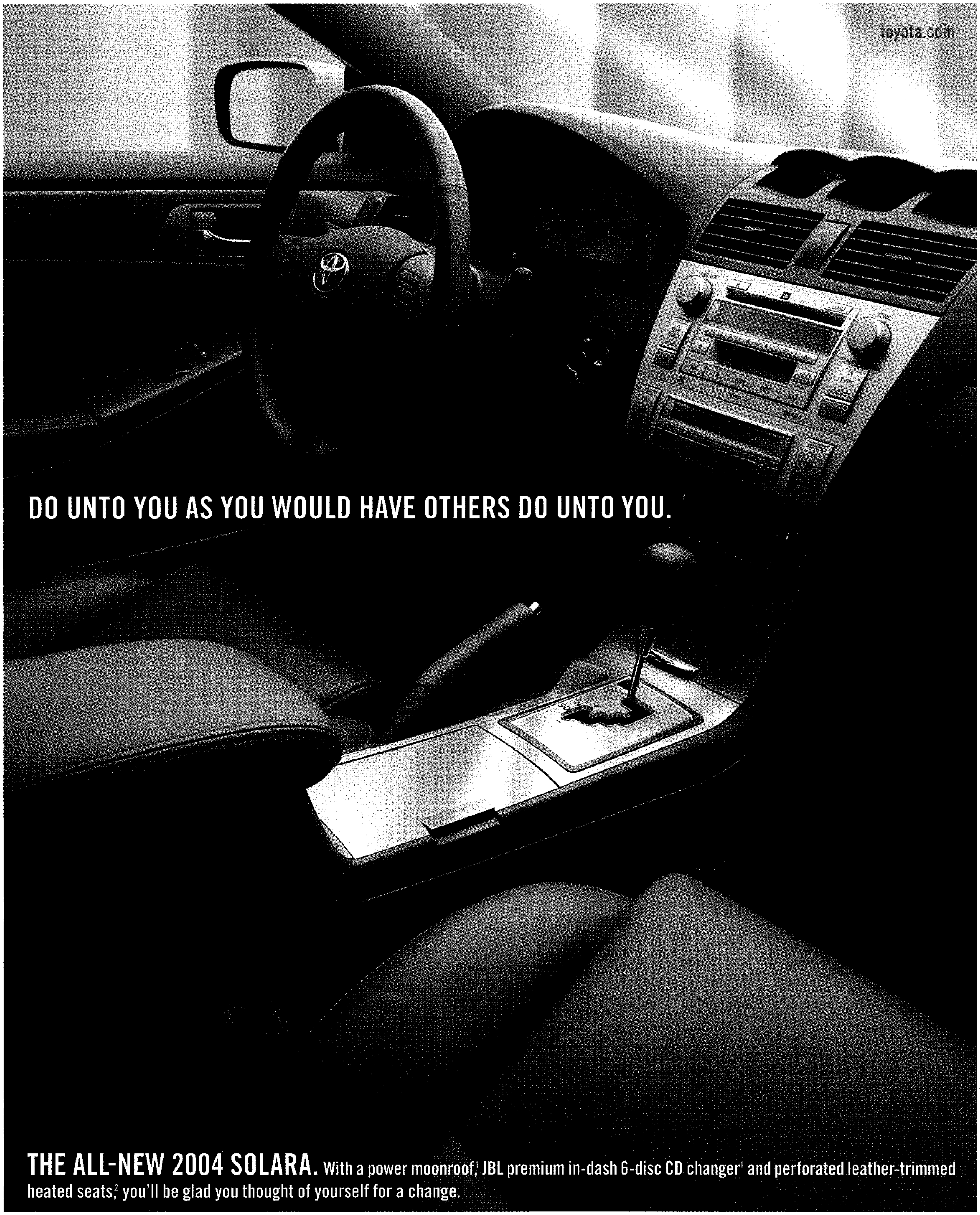
Some theorists regard block as a condition that one can be stricken with.

RICHARD McGUIRE

Coleridge is one of the first known cases of what we call writer’s block. Sometimes, “block” means complete shutdown: the writer stops writing, or stops producing anything that seems to him worth publishing. In other cases, he simply stops writing what he wants to write. He may manage other kinds of writing, but not the kind he sees as his vocation. (Coleridge turned out a great deal of journalism and literary criticism in his later years, but he still saw himself as disabled, because he wasn’t writing serious poetry.) Writer’s block is a modern notion. Writers have probably suffered over their work ever since they first started signing it, but it was not until the early nineteenth century that creative inhibition became an actual issue in literature, something people took into account when they talked about the art. That was partly because, around this time, the conception of the art changed. Before, writers regarded what they did as a rational, purposeful activity, which *they* controlled. By contrast, the early Romantics came to see poetry as something externally, and magically, conferred. In Shelley’s words, “A man cannot say, ‘I will compose poetry.’ ” Poetry was the product of “some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind,” which more or less blew the material into the poet, and he just had to wait for this to happen. In terms of getting up in the morning and sitting down to work, a crueller theory can hardly be imagined, and a number of the major Romantic poets showed its effects. Wordsworth, like Coleridge, produced his best poetry early on, in about ten years. Poets, in their youth, “begin in gladness,” he wrote, when he was in his thirties, in “Resolution and Independence.” “But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.”

After the English Romantics, the next group of writers known for not writing were the French Symbolists. Mallarmé, “the Hamlet of writing,” as Roland Barthes called him, published some sixty poems in thirty-six years. Rimbaud, notoriously, gave up poetry at the age of nineteen. In the next generation, Paul Valéry wrote some poetry and prose in his early twenties and then took twenty years off, to study his mental processes. Under prodding from friends, he finally returned to publishing verse and in six years produced the three thin volumes that secured his fame. Then he gave up again. These fastidious Frenchmen, when they described the difficulties of writing, did not talk, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, about a metaphysical problem, or even a psychological problem. To them, the problem was with language: how to get past its vague, cliché-crammed character and arrive at the actual nature of experience. They needed a scalpel, they felt, and they were given a mallet.

It is curious to see this writing inhibition arise in the nineteenth century, for many of the writers of that century, or at least the novelists, were monsters of productivity. Scott, Balzac, Hugo, Dickens, Trollope: these men published as if they couldn’t stop, and they were proud of it. Every day for years, Trollope reported in his “Autobiography,” he woke in darkness and wrote from 5:30 A.M. to 8:30 A.M., with his watch in front of him. He required of himself two hundred and fifty words every quarter of an hour. If he finished one novel before eight-thirty, he took out a fresh piece of paper and started the next. The writing session was followed, for a long stretch of time, by a day job with the postal service. Plus, he said, he always hunted at least twice a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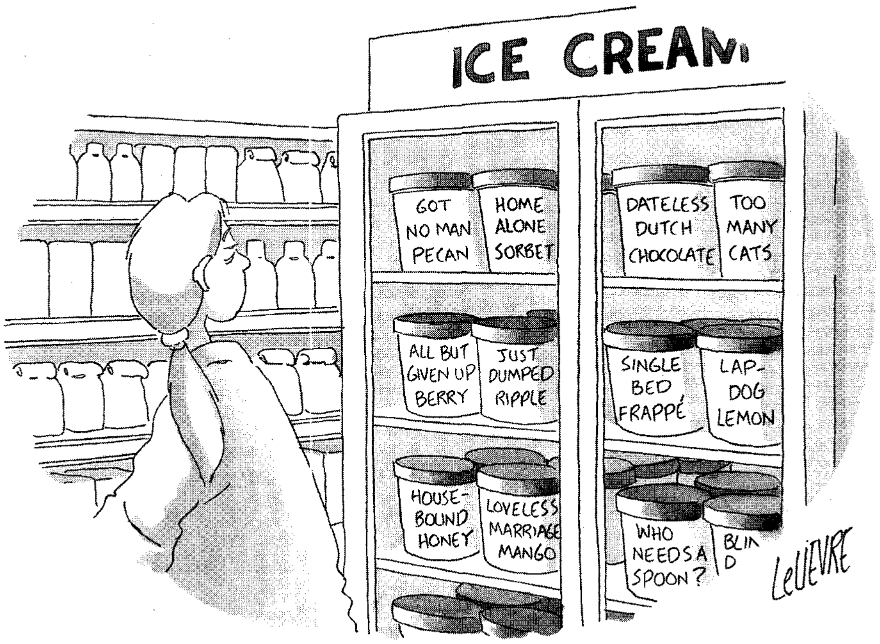

week. Under this regimen, he produced forty-nine novels in thirty-five years. Having prospered so well, he urged his method on all writers: "Let their work be to them as is his common work to the common laborer. No gigantic efforts will then be necessary. He need tie no wet towels round his brow, nor sit for thirty hours at his desk without moving,—as men have sat, or said that they have sat."

Had this advice been given in 1850, it might have been gratefully accepted. But Trollope's autobiography was published in 1883, the year after his death. By that time, romantic notions about writing had filtered down to the public. Many readers now believed that literature was something produced by fine-minded, unhappy people who did not hunt, and to this audience Trollope's recommendations seemed clear evidence of shallowness. According to Michael Sadleir, who wrote the introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of the "Autobiography," the book "extinguished its author's good name for a quarter of a century." Trollope was later rehabilitated, but still today there is a prejudice against prolific writers. Joyce Carol Oates, who has published thirty-eight novels, twenty-one story collections, nine books of poetry, and twelve essay collections, and who also teaches full time at Princeton, has had to answer rude questions about her rate of production. "Is there a compulsive element in all this activity?" one interviewer asked her.

In the United States, the golden age of artistic inhibition was probably the period immediately following the Second World War, which saw the convergence of two forces. One was a sudden rise in the prestige of psychoanalysis. The second was a tremendous surge in ambition on the part of American artists—a lot of talk about the Great American Novel and hitting the ball out of the park. Some of those hopes were fulfilled. The fifties were a thrilling decade in American literature (Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams). But, as the bar rose, so did everyone's anxiety, and the doctor was called. Many, many writers went into psychoanalysis in those years, and they began writing about the relationship of art and neurosis. Early on, in 1941, came Edmund Wilson's book "The Wound and the Bow," which reinvoked the ancient Greek formula of the mad genius. After discussing the psychological harm suffered in childhood by Dickens, Kipling, and others, Wilson concluded that "genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together." In 1945, Wilson made the point again, by publishing, under the title "The Crack-Up," a collection of the later writings of his friend F. Scott Fitzgerald. Famous at twenty-three, washed up at forty, dead at forty-four, Fitzgerald was already everyone's favorite example of artistic flameout, but this posthumous volume, with Fitzgerald's own description of his situation ("No choice, no road, no hope"), helped plant the idea that his early exit was somehow a normal pattern, at least for American writers. As he famously put it, "There are no second acts in American lives." In 1947, *Partisan Review* printed an essay, "Writers and Madness," by one of its editors, William Barrett, claiming that the modern writer was by definition an "estranged neurotic," because the difficulty of being authentic in a false-faced world forced him to go deeper and deeper into the unconscious, thus pushing him toward madness: "The game is to go as close as possible without crossing over." Many did cross over, he added darkly.

Not everyone agreed that writers were mental cases, but a number of psychoanalysts did, and their loudest spokesman was Edmund Bergler, a Viennese émigré who in the forties and fifties put forth what is probably the most confident theory of writer's block ever advanced. First of all, he coined the term. (Formerly, people had spoken of "creative inhibition" or the like.) Second, he proclaimed its cause: oral masochism, entrapment in rage over the milk-denying pre-Oedipal mother. Starved before, the writer chose to become starved again—that is, blocked. Bergler claimed to have treated more than forty writers, with a hundred-per-cent success rate. That didn't mean that the writers became like other people. "I have never seen a 'normal' writer," Bergler reported. Even if their work was going well, this was often "entirely surrounded by neuroticism in private life"—squalid love affairs, homosexuality, etc. They had recompense, however: "*the megalomaniac pleasure of creation . . . produces a type of elation which cannot be compared with that experienced by other mortals*" (italics his).

In today's psychology of writer's block, as in today's psychology in general, the focus is less on the unconscious than on brain chemistry. Blocked writers are now being treated with antidepressants such as Prozac, though some report that the drugs tend to eliminate their desire to write together with their regret over not doing so. Others are being given Ritalin and other stimulants, on the theory that their problems may be due to the now fashionable condition of attention deficit disorder.

We are even getting biological theories of literary creativity and its stoppage. In a 1993 book called "Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament," the psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison argued that manic-depressive illness was the source of much of the best poetry produced from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. This year, we were offered a follow-up hypothesis, in "The Midnight Disease: The Drive to Write, Writer's Block, and the Creative Brain," by Alice W. Flaherty, who teaches neurology at Harvard Medical School. Like Jamison, Flaherty thinks that mood disorders may jump-start the literary imagination. (Also like Jamison, she has suffered from a mood disorder, and she feels that she owes her writing career to her manic phases.) But she goes further, speculating at length on which parts of the brain are responsible for literary creativity and its interruption. She believes that writing is generated along the pathways that connect the limbic system—a structure deep in the brain, the source of emotion and drive—with the temporal lobe, which controls our ability to grasp linguistic and philosophical meaning. As for block, she thinks the main problem may lie in the frontal lobe, because block shares some characteristics with disorders arising from frontal-lobe damage, such as Broca's aphasia, which destroys the ability to produce normal language.

Flaherty understands that these biological theories may shock people who still cherish the idea that art comes from something other than the action of neurotransmitters, and she spends many intelligent pages trying to shepherd us through the difficulty of accepting that the mind is actually the brain, a physical organ. She thinks we can concede this without discarding the more exalted concepts of inspiration, the "inner voice," and so on. She, too, believes in those things. Nevertheless, she is a brain scientist, and she can't help offering a few Frankensteinian suggestions. For example, she describes a new technique called transcranial magnetic stimulation, in which brain activity is controlled via the manipulation of magnetic fields. "It may soon be possible," she speculates, "to ward off depression and at least some types of writer's block by holding a magnetic wand over a precise location on our skulls."

In talk therapy, the trend these days is cognitive-behavioral therapy, which teaches you to revise your thoughts and preconceptions in order to change the behavior that issues from them. Apart from one-on-one treatment, there are a number of cognitive-behavioral books for blocked writers—for example, "Break Writer's Block Now!," by Jerrold Mundis, a novelist. Mundis also has a set of four audiocassettes that, for seventy-seven dollars, will talk you through his technique. I've listened to the tapes. The idea is to remove your fear of writing by combatting your negative thoughts with self-affirmations ("I am a richly talented writer"), by controlling in your mind the size of your project (don't start fantasizing about selling your novel to Hollywood), by thinking of what you're writing as just a draft (don't revise as you write), and, above all, by carefully scheduling your work and quitting the minute your assigned daily writing session is over (use a timer). Mundis's manner is very cheerleadery, in the way of motivational training, and his Web site, www.unblock.org, where you can order the tapes, reads like a subway ad for a baldness cure. Still, some of his advice is good, at least for beginning writers.

Many of these theorists regard block as a thing in itself, a mental condition that one can be stricken with. Is it? Like most of today's recognized psychological disorders, it is a concept that other cultures, other times, have done fine without. Not only did the notion of block not appear until the nineteenth century, in Europe, but many Europeans today don't seem to know what it is. According to Zachary Leader's 1991 "Writer's Block," the best book on the subject (much of my historical information comes from it), the French and the Germans have no term for writer's block. Even in England, where the idea is supposed to have been born, modern writers tend to sniff at it. "I don't get writing blocks except from the stationer," Anthony Burgess told an interviewer. "I can't understand the American literary block . . .

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unless it means that the blocked man isn't forced economically to write (as the English writer, lacking campuses and grants, usually is) and hence can afford the luxury of fearing the critics' pounce on a new work not as good as the last." Burgess may be correct that writer's block, by now, is largely an American idea, a product of American overreaching. Particularly in its mid-century version, with Bergler's talk of megalomania and elation, the concept is suspiciously glamorous—Faustian, *poète maudit*. The term itself is grandiose, with its implication that writers contain within them great wells of creativity to which their access is merely impeded.

But the fact remains that some writers do stop writing, long before they want to. Why? Scientists have a rule that you don't explain things by remote and elaborate causes when simpler, more immediate causes offer themselves. In tales of block, certain circumstances turn up again and again. They are by no means sufficient causes—as we know, a condition that defeats one person may toughen up, even encourage, another—but they are probably contributing factors. One, paradoxically, is great praise. A story that haunts the halls of *The New Yorker* is that of Joseph Mitchell, who came on staff in 1938, wrote many brilliant pieces, and then, after the publication of his greatest piece, "Joe Gould's Secret," in 1964, came to the office almost every day for the next thirty-two years without filing another word. In a series of tributes published in *The New Yorker* upon Mitchell's death, in 1996, Calvin Trillin recalled hearing once that Mitchell was "writing away at a normal pace until some professor called him the greatest living master of the English declarative sentence and stopped him cold."

There are many other theories about Mitchell. (For one thing, "Joe Gould's Secret" was about a blocked writer.) It is nevertheless the case that, however much artists may want attention, getting it can put them off their feed, particularly when it comes at the beginning of their careers. That may have been the case with Dashiell Hammett. Hammett wrote his first four novels in three years, while he was in his thirties, and they made him famous. Then he went to Hollywood, where he made piles of money and spent much of it in bars. In 1934, when he was thirty-nine, his fifth novel, "The Thin Man," came out, and that was the end, though he lived for almost three more decades. In his later life, he said that he stopped publishing because he felt he was repeating himself: "It is the beginning of the end when you discover that you have a style." He tried to alter his style. He wanted to go mainstream, leave the detective novel behind. He wrote and wrote, but he never accomplished anything that satisfied him.

Again, however, Scott Fitzgerald's is the paradigmatic story of early success, early failure, and not just because his talent was so great but because he saw what was happening to him and wrote about it. In 1937, he published an essay, "Early Success"—it is included in "The Crack-Up"—in which he said that "premature success gives one an almost mystical conception of destiny as opposed to will power. . . . The man who arrives young believes that he exercises his will because his star is shining," a conviction that leaves him little to fall back on when the star isn't shining. That same year, Fitzgerald, finished (in his opinion) as a novelist—and also, by this time, seriously alcoholic—moved to Hollywood in order to make some money as a screenwriter. At the studios, he tried to stay on the wagon, but he repeatedly went on weeklong benders, which, when his friends finally located him, left him in need of round-the-clock nursing and tubal feeding. He soon found himself out of work as a result. To fill in financially, he wrote a series of stories for *Esquire* about a fictional screenwriter, Pat Hobby, whose life was an antic version of his own. Hobby used to get two thousand dollars a week from the studios; now he gets three hundred and fifty. (In 1929, Fitzgerald was being paid four thousand dollars per story by *The Saturday Evening Post*. For the Hobby stories, *Esquire* seems to have paid him a hundred and fifty dollars apiece.) Formerly, Hobby was one of the men in Hollywood who "had wives and Filipinos and swimming pools." Now, in order to eat, he has to steal food from movie sets. The Hobby stories are a self-loathing comedy. Like Coleridge's notebooks, they make you want to scream. Why couldn't this lavishly gifted artist straighten himself out? He tried. In 1939, he began a novel—another wonderful one, "The Last Tycoon," about Hollywood—but six chapters into it he dropped dead of a heart attack. Five years later, a Fitzgerald revival began, and he soon became what he is to us now, an American classic. But, as far as he knew when he died, he was a forgotten man.

Fitzgerald's and Hammett's histories are not the only ones in which writing problems are complicated by alcoholism. From the nineteen-twenties at least through the fifties, American liter-

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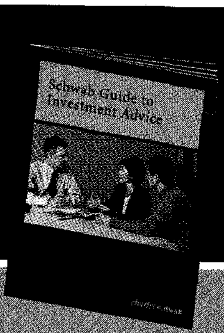

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ature was awash in alcohol. Tom Dardis begins his book "The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer" (1989) by noting that of the seven native-born Americans awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature five were alcoholics: Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and John Steinbeck. As for problem drinkers who didn't get the Nobel Prize, Dardis assembles an impressive list, including Edna St. Vincent Millay, Hart Crane, Thomas Wolfe, Dorothy Parker, Ring Lardner, Djuna Barnes, John O'Hara, Tennessee Williams, John Berryman, Carson McCullers, James Jones, John Cheever, Jean Stafford, Truman Capote, Raymond Carver, and James Agee. A number of these careers ended early, and badly.

When an alcoholic writer stops writing, do we call this block or just alcoholism? (Or something else: Hemingway suffered serious depressions.) Such cases lack the bleak dignity generally associated with block. Instead of the lonely writer, at his desk, staring at the blank page, we get a disorderly drunk, being hauled off to detox. The relationship between writing and alcohol is a knotty problem, but it clearly involves a circular process. Many writers use alcohol to help themselves write—to calm their anxieties, lift their inhibitions. This may work for a while (Faulkner wrote all his best novels while drinking whiskey, continually, at his desk), but eventually the writing suffers. The unhappy writer then drinks more; the writing then suffers more, and so on. In my observation, American writers today drink much less than their predecessors. I asked a psychoanalyst what they do instead, to take the edge off. "Exercise," he said.

"Whom the gods wish to destroy," Cyril Connolly once said, "they first call promising." A subdivision of the early-success problem is second-novel syndrome. The writer produces a first novel, and it is a hit; then he sits down to write a second novel, and finds his brain clenched. Jeffrey Eugenides' first novel, "The Virgin Suicides" (1993), was an enormous critical success. It also sold very well, and was made into a movie. His second novel, "Middlesex," was published two years ago, and won the Pulitzer Prize. But between those two books lie nine years. I asked Eugenides why. One reason, he said, was that "Middlesex" was far more ambitious than "The Virgin Suicides." (It is a sweeping family chronicle, more than five hundred pages long and full of Greek and American history.) But another reason was the circumstances surrounding a second novel:

> No one is waiting for you to write your first book. No one cares if you finish it. But after your first, if it goes well, everyone seems to be waiting. You're suddenly considered to be a professional writer, a fiction machine, but you know very well that you're just getting going. You go from having nothing to lose to having everything to lose, and that's what creates the panic. . . . In my own case, I decided to give myself the time to learn the things I needed to know in order to write my second book, rather than just writing it in a rush because there were now people eager to read it. Finally, of course, I had to leave the country. In Berlin I regained the blessed anonymity I'd had while writing "The Virgin Suicides." I got back to thinking only about the book. . . . Now [since "Middlesex"] I've lost the anonymity I had in Berlin and so am moving to Chicago. If things continue to go well, I will end up living in Elko, Nevada.

Eugenides survived second-novel syndrome, and so do most novelists, but some are felled by it. "To Kill a Mockingbird" (1960), Harper Lee's first novel, published when she was thirty-four, was an immediate best-seller. It won the Pulitzer Prize. It was made into a hit movie. And then came nothing. In 1961, Lee told an interviewer that she was working on her second novel, but that she wrote very slowly, producing only a page or two a day. Maybe we will hear from her yet, but she is now seventy-eight.

We will not hear from Ralph Ellison. Ellison's first novel, "Invisible Man" (1952), was also a best-seller, and more than that. It was an "art" novel, a modernist novel, and it was by a black writer. It therefore raised hopes that literary segregation might be breachable. In its style the book combined the arts of black culture—above all, jazz—with white influences: Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Faulkner. Its message was likewise integrationist—good news in the nineteen-fifties, at the beginning of the civil-rights movement. "Invisible Man" became a fixture of American-literature curricula. Ellison was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was not just a writer; he was a hero. And everyone had great hopes for his second novel.

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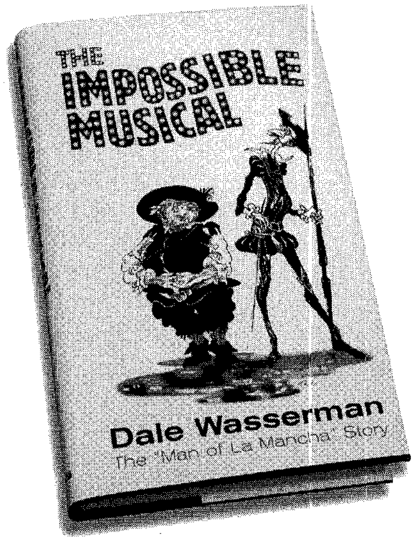

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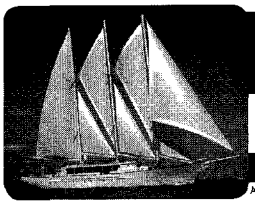

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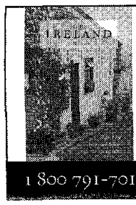

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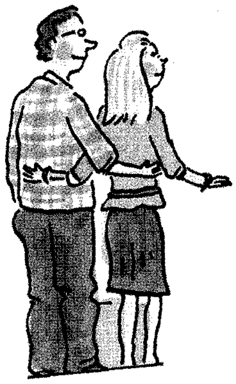

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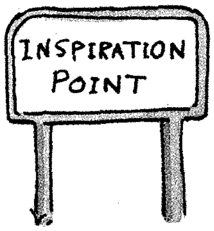
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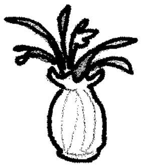

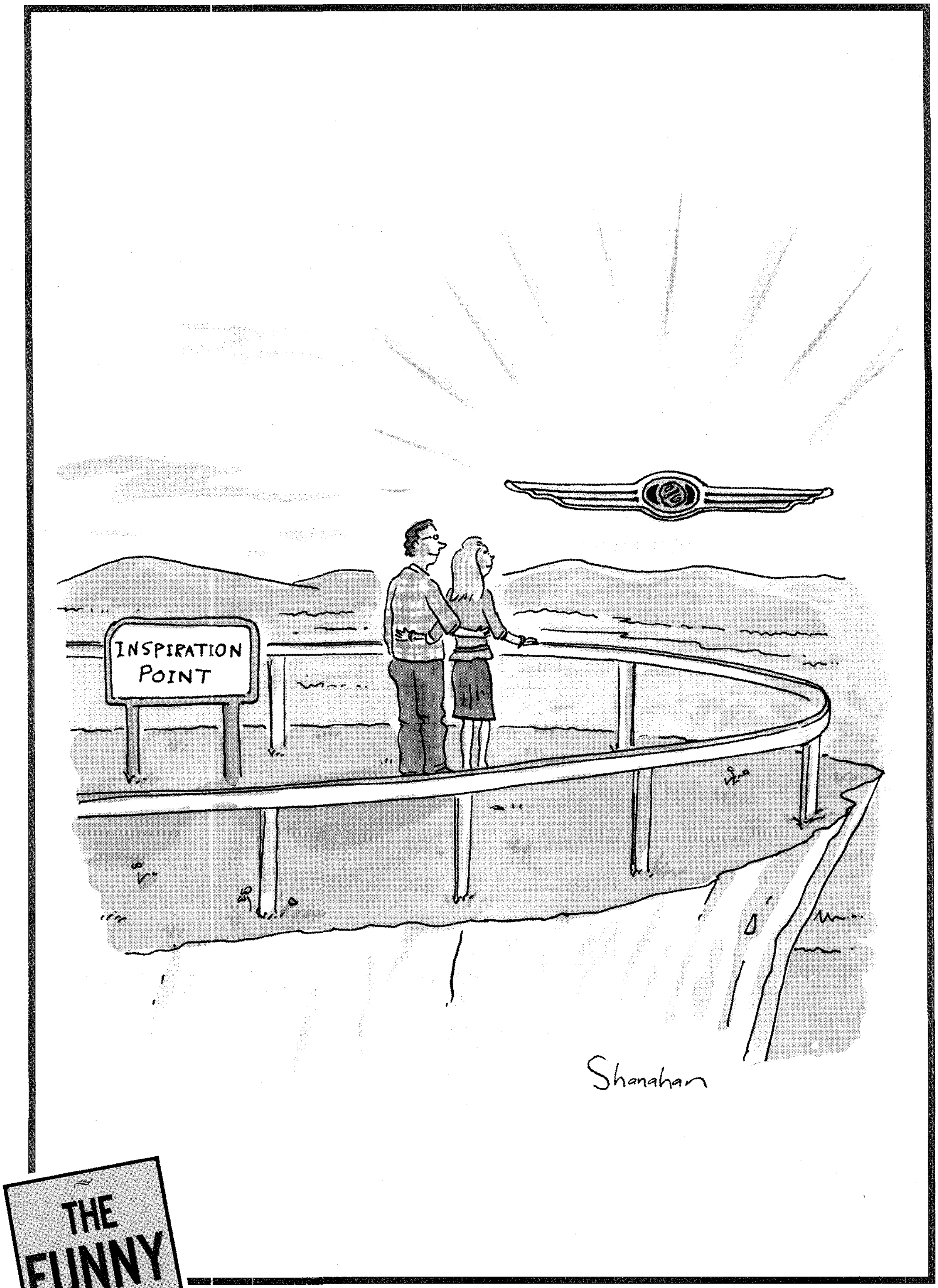
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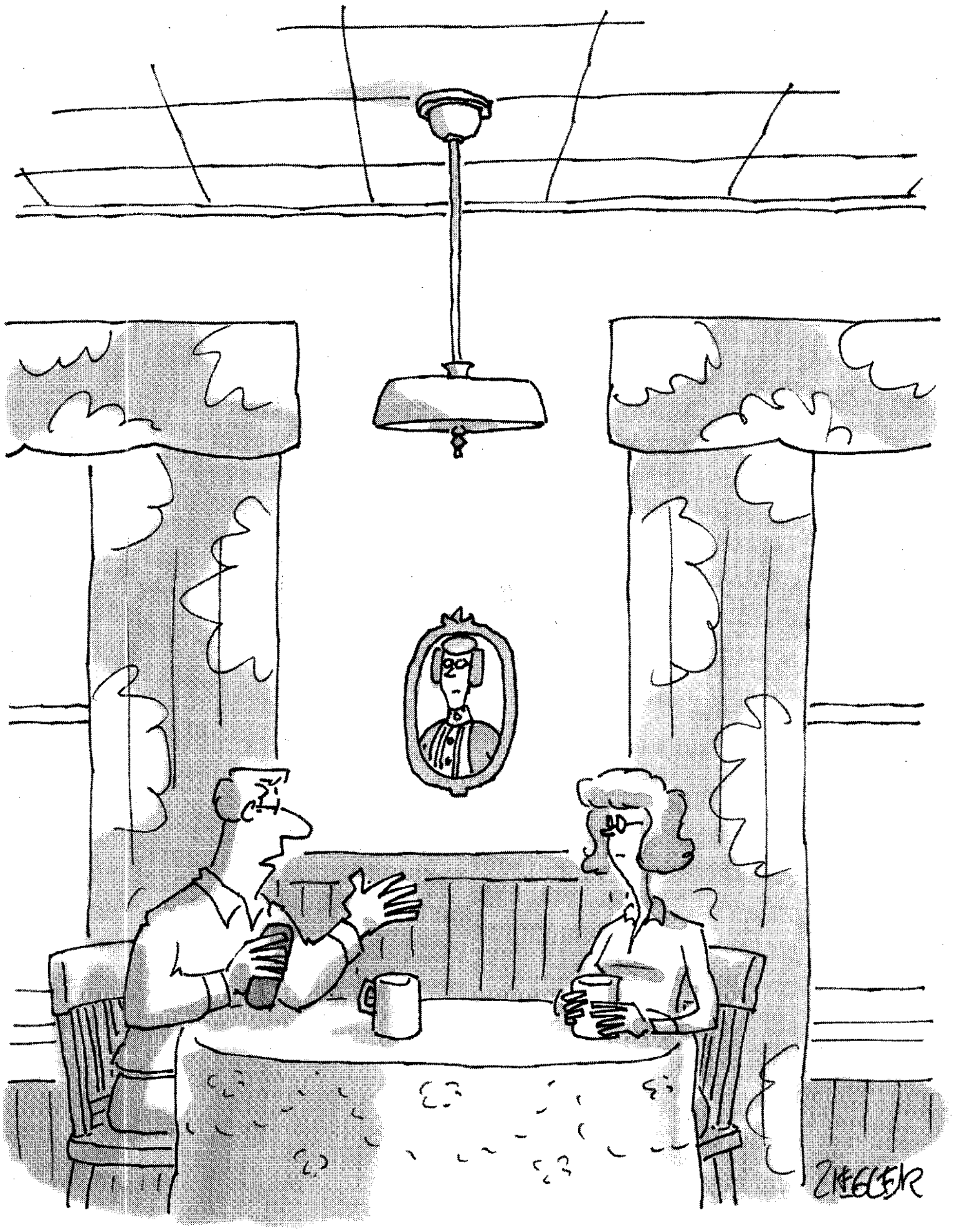

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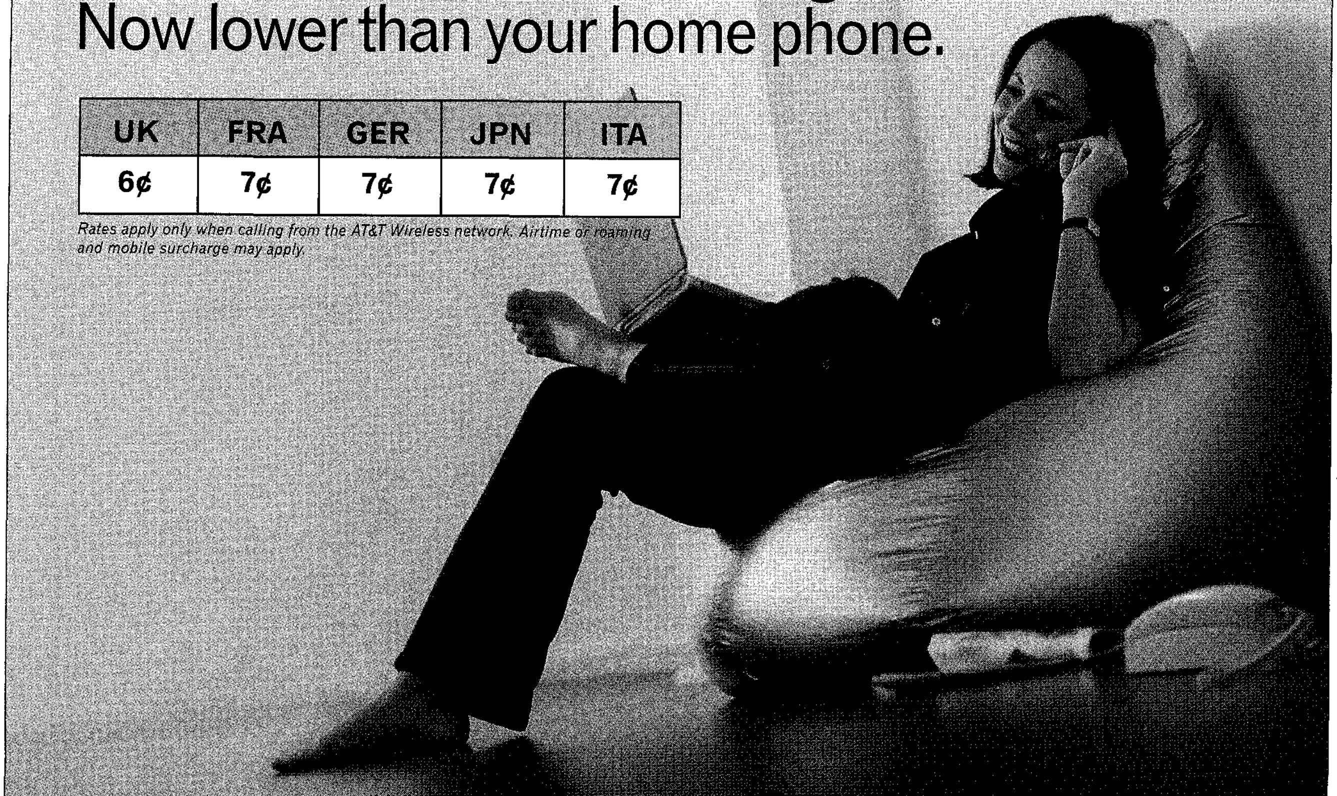

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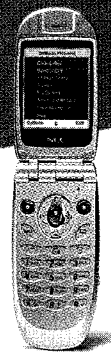

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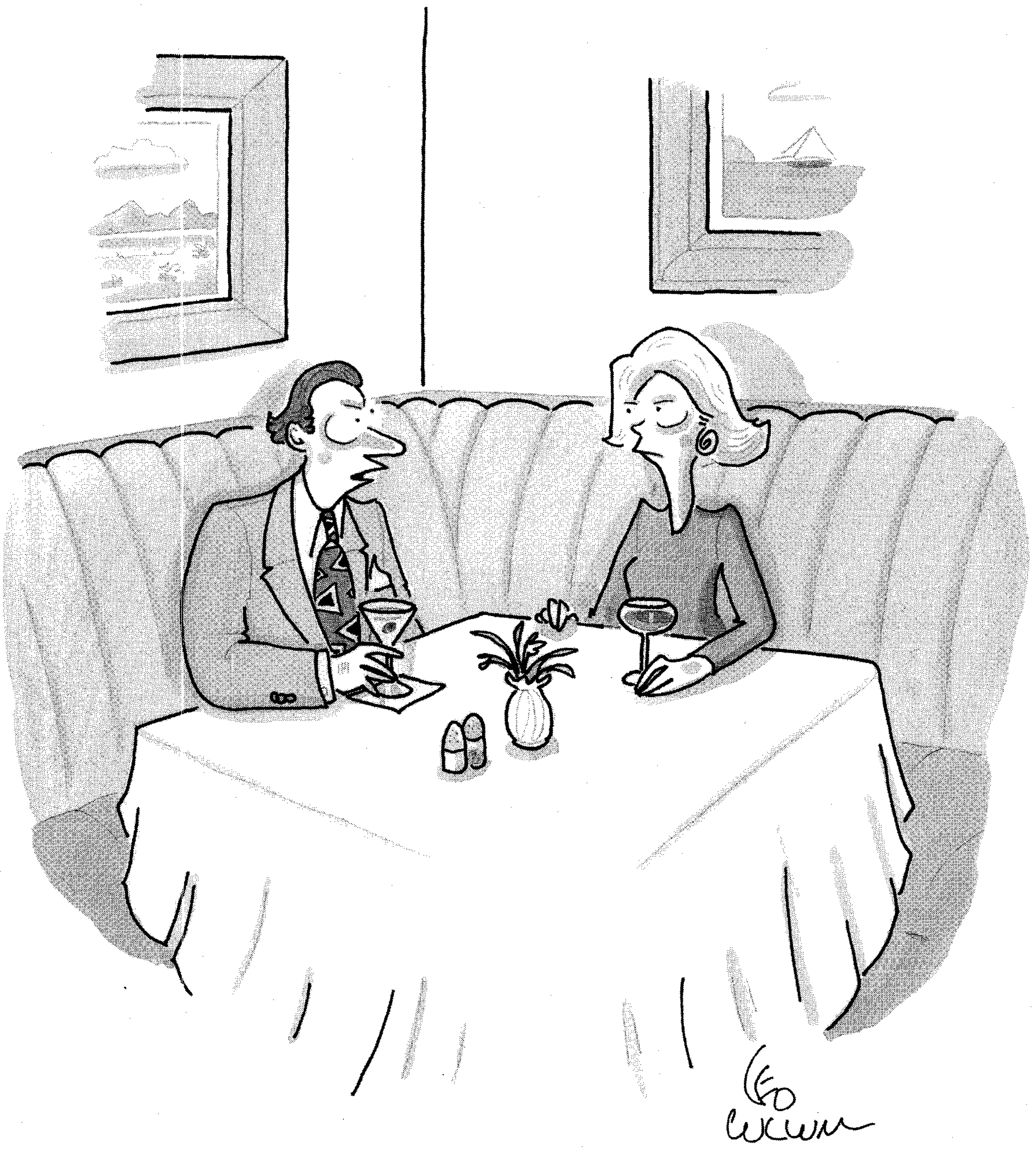

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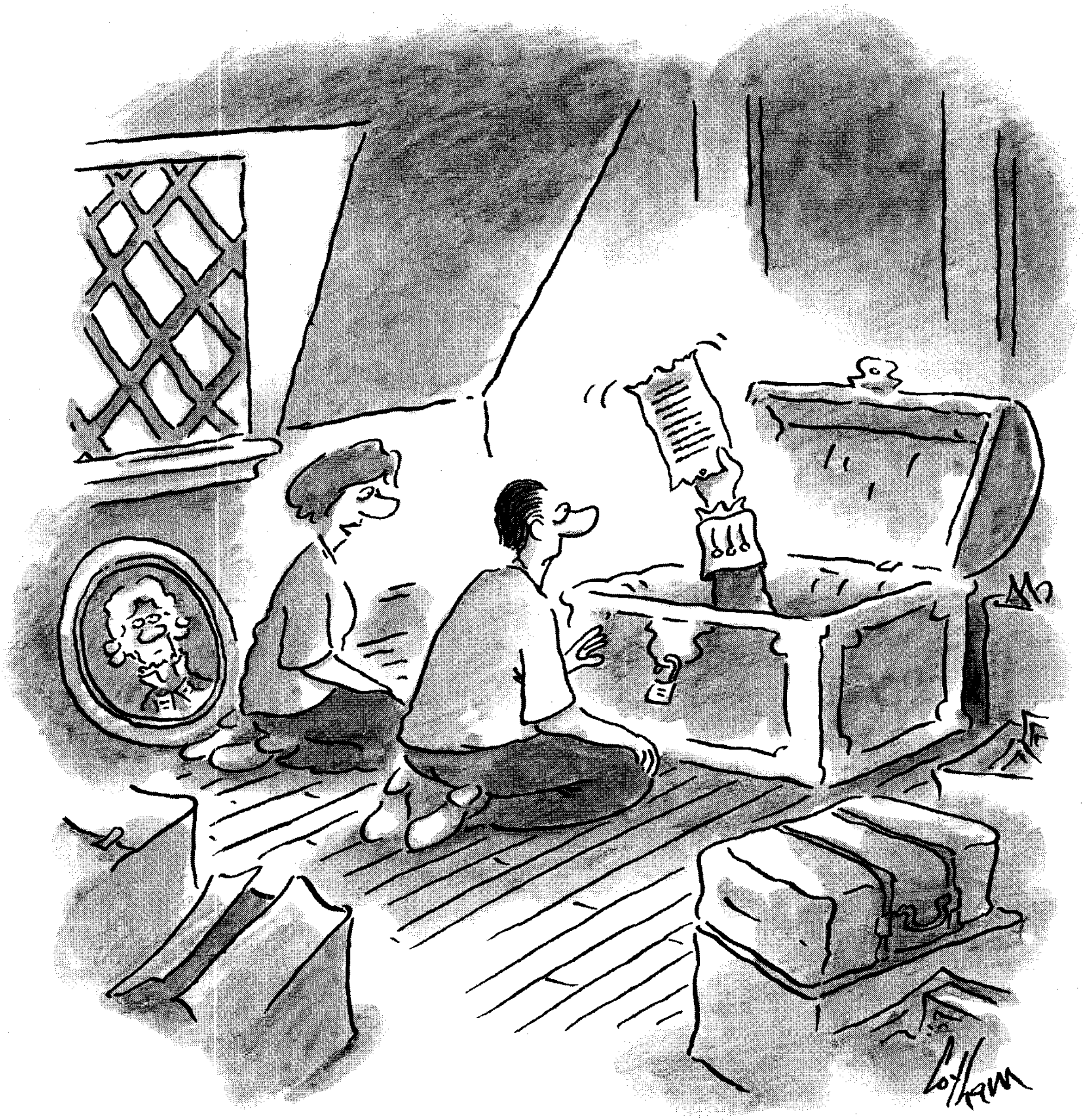

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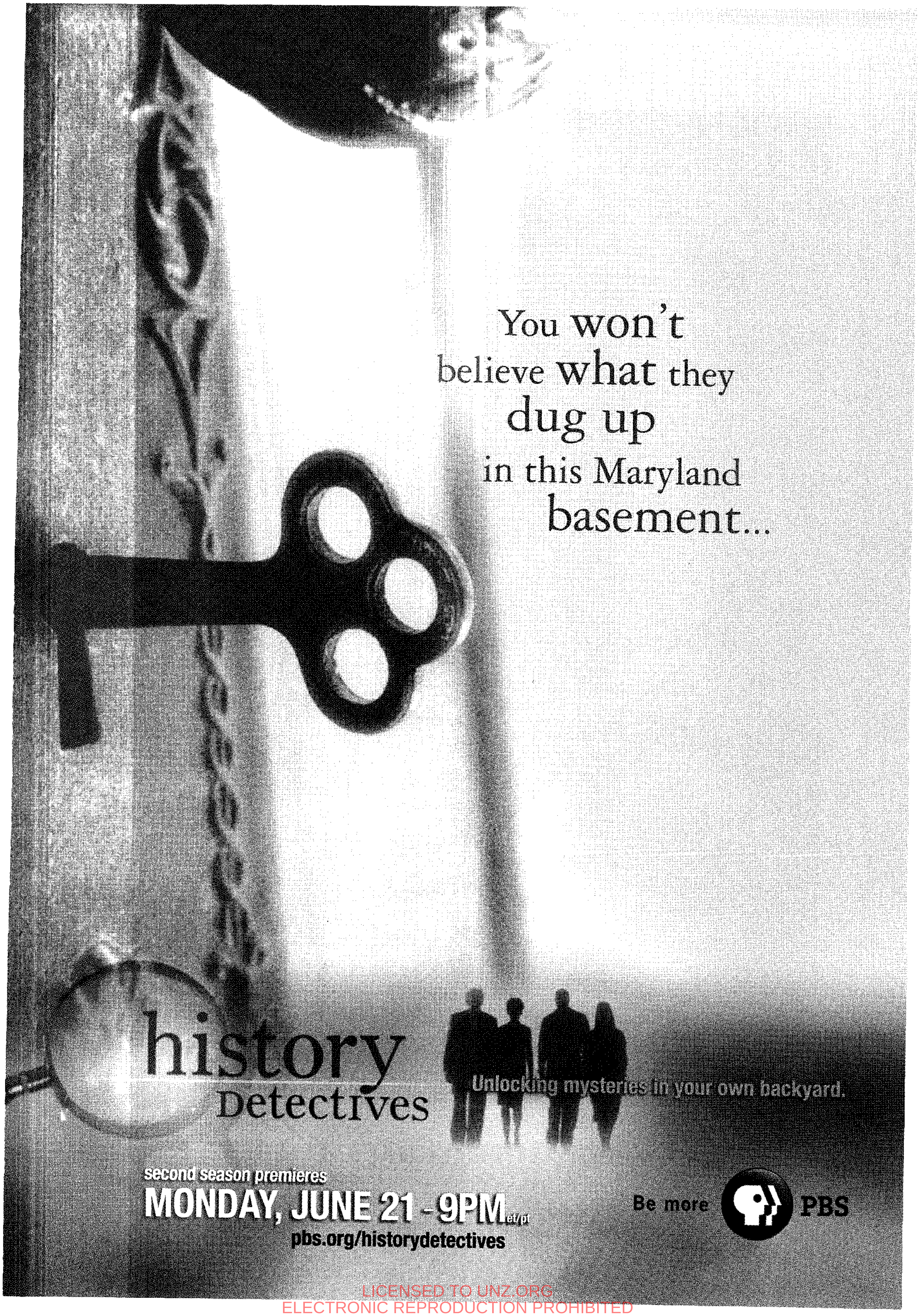
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the culture. It grew and grew. Eventually, he thought it might require three volumes. He worked on it for forty years, until he died in 1994, at the age of eighty, leaving behind more than two thousand pages of manuscript and notes. His literary executor, John F. Callahan, tried at first to assemble the projected symphonic work. Finally, he threw up his hands and carved a simpler, one-volume novel out of the material. This book, entitled "Juneteenth," was published in 1999. Some reviewers praised it; others cold-shouldered it, as not-Ellison.

Ellison's was probably the most commented upon case of block in the history of American literature, and it was a tremendous sorrow to him. He had other griefs, too. While his integrationist message was welcomed in the nineteen-fifties, by the seventies it looked to many people, particularly black writers, like Uncle Tomism, and this dignified man was booed and heckled when he spoke at public events. In discussions of writer's block, it is sometimes said that a writer can be stopped when he outlives the world he was writing about, and for. That may have been true, in part, for Ellison.

Long before the nineteen-fifties—indeed, starting with Freud's 1910 book on Leonardo da Vinci—psychoanalysts were pondering creative block, and what they saw there, as elsewhere, was unconscious conflict. According to this line of thought, the artist trawls his unconscious for his material, but every now and then, in that dark estuary, he encounters something so frightening to him that he simply comes to a halt, and no one ever knows why. Maybe so, but sometimes the conflict is conscious: the artist knows why. Such may have been the case with E. M. Forster, who published five successful novels and then, to the dismay of his readers, gave up fiction at the age of forty-five. According to some commentators, part of the problem was that Forster finally figured out, in his thirties, that he was homosexual, at which point he felt he could no longer write about heterosexual love and marriage, which had been the substance of his fiction. Nor could he publish a novel about homosexuals; such a thing could not be printed in England in his time. He did write a homosexual novel, "Maurice," which he finished in 1914, but he had to put it in a drawer. After a ten-year gap, he produced one final novel, his greatest, "A Passage to India"—again heterosexual, but with a newly dark view of sex—and then, for the remaining forty-six years of his life, he confined himself to nonfiction. It should be added that he expressed no regret over this, a fact that may place him outside the category of the blocked. Presumably, a blocked writer feels guilty, feels like a failure—the Coleridge pattern.

A purer and more colorful example is that of Henry Roth. Roth's first novel, "Call It Sleep," a highly autobiographical narrative of Jewish immigrant life in New York, was published in 1934, when he was twenty-eight. It did not make much of a splash at first, but when it was reprinted in paperback, in 1964, it became a sensation. At the time of the reprint, Roth was living in complete obscurity on a duck farm in Maine. Apart from a few stories soon after "Call It Sleep," he hadn't published anything in thirty years. Nor did his belated triumph rouse him quickly, though the royalties from the paperback allowed him to sell the duck farm and buy a mobile home in Albuquerque. But in 1979, at the age of seventy-three, he embarked on a new novel, which eventually swelled to four volumes, under the general title "Mercy of a Rude Stream." The first volume appeared in 1994, and it was well received. In 1995 came the second volume, "A Diving Rock on the Hudson," and this was greeted with even more interest, for in it the protagonist, Ira—who Roth gave readers every reason to believe was based on himself—begins an affair at age fifteen with his twelve-year-old sister, Minnie. The sex scenes are very raw. Ira and Minnie go to it every Sunday morning when their mother leaves to do her shopping.

Prior to the publication of "A Diving Rock," Roth's editor, Robert Weil, then of St. Martin's, persuaded him to

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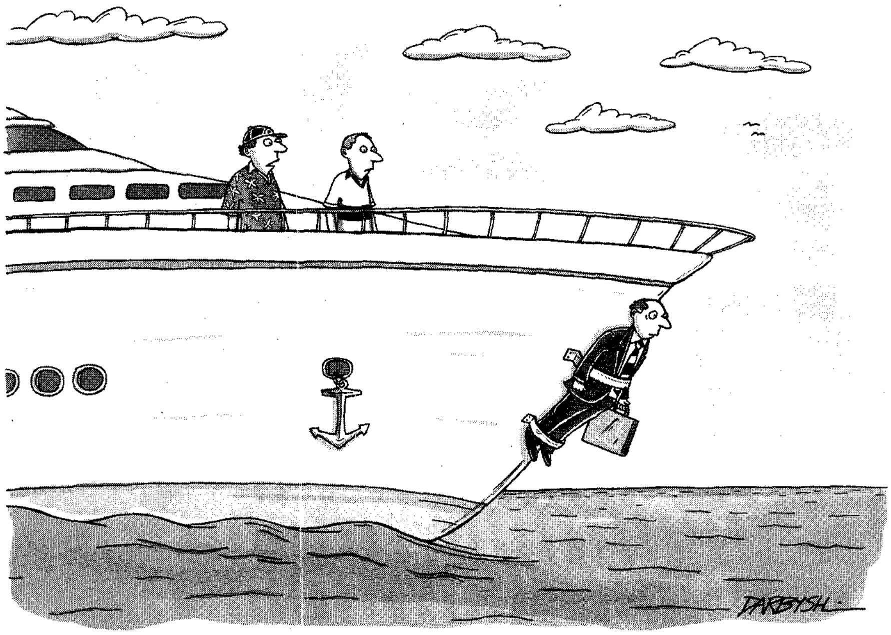


"It's supposed to ward off frivolous lawsuits."

alert his sister, Rose Broder, to the contents of the book. "How can you do this to me?" she wrote back, and she reminded him that she was the one who had believed in him as a writer, and who had typed "Call It Sleep." Roth responded by prefacing "A Diving Rock" with a statement that none of it was autobiographical—which many people took as further indication that it was autobiographical. Once the book came out, interviewers called Broder, and she denied the whole thing. "This is not pleasant for me," she told *The Jewish Week*. "I'm a very old lady." Soon afterward, she entered into an agreement with Roth whereby, in return for immunity from legal action, he paid her ten thousand dollars and promised that in future volumes there would be no more sex between Ira and Minnie. Roth told Weil—his narrator also says it in "A Diving Rock"—that the incest story was a major reason that the novel was delayed for so many years.

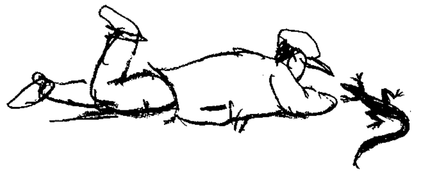
Beneath this drama, however, there may lie another tale. When Roth wrote "Call It Sleep," he was living with Eda Lou Walton, a well-known critic, twelve years older than he, who, he said, became "a mistress and a mother" to him. Walton later claimed that she did a huge amount of editorial work on "Call It Sleep." When Roth returned to fiction, he had another helper at his elbow. In 1989, a seventeen-year-old high-school student, Felicia Steele, went to work for Roth as his typist, and she soon graduated from typing to editing. For a year, she and her boyfriend even moved in with Roth. Day by day, she worked on his manuscript, cutting and shaping it under Weil's direction. Steele, now an English professor at the College of New Jersey, says that she was grateful to have this task: "I got a whole second education from Henry." Weil, too, says he felt honored to serve Roth's gift. For both of them, however, it was a herculean labor, requiring five years' work on thousands of pages of manuscript. So while Roth's sixty-year dry period may have been due to his feelings about his relationship with his sister, he may also, during those years, have had another, less sensational problem: that he couldn't produce a finished manuscript without a full-time editor.

These are among the most famous writer's block stories in modern literature—the supposed spine-tinglers—and all of them, when you look at them, come to seem unremarkable. Maybe the English are right: block is just a hocus-pocus covering life's regular, humbling facts. People made too much fuss over you, or expected too much of you. Or you just got tired. When I put the question of block to Elizabeth Hardwick, who was part of New York's high-pressure literary world in the postwar years, she seemed to believe that a major problem was just the passing of youth. "I don't think getting older is good for the creative process," she said. "Writing is so hard. It's the only time in your life when you have to think." But loss of energy is only one problem. Some people use up their material. There has been much puzzlement among literary historians over the petering out of Melville's career as a novelist after he published "Moby-Dick," at the age of thirty-two, and various theories have been advanced: that he was permanently embittered by the reviews of "Moby-Dick," that he felt his fiction revealed too much about his latent homosexuality, and so forth. But John Updike, in an essay on this question, says that basically Melville exhausted his artistic capital—his seafaring years—in "Typee," "Omoo," and "Moby-Dick." If, after those books, he wrote a couple of mediocre novels and then gave up the trade, it is no surprise.

With so many ordinary facts lurking behind its impressive name, writer's block may come to seem just that, a name, and names can be dangerous. The philosopher Ian Hacking has written about the problem of "dynamic nominalism," meaning that once you invent a category—as, for example, the category of "homosexual" seems to have been invented in the late nineteenth century—people will sort themselves into it, behave according to the description, and thus contrive new ways of being. Possibly, some writers become blocked simply because the concept exists, and invoking it is easier for them than writing. Some may also find it a more interesting complaint to bring to a psychoanalyst than garden-variety inertia. (One analyst, Donald Kaplan, has written that analysis may in fact not be good for blocked writers. They use it, he says, as a further ground for procrastination. First I'll finish the analysis, they say, then I'll tackle the book.) But for most writers the ~~danger of "block"~~ is that it gives them something to scare themselves with. They are a superstitious lot anyway. Alice Flaherty, in "The Midnight Disease," tells the story of a novelist who, at a literary dinner party, brought up the subject of block. Later, she got angry phone calls from several of the other guests, telling her that her thoughtless remark left them unable to write for days.

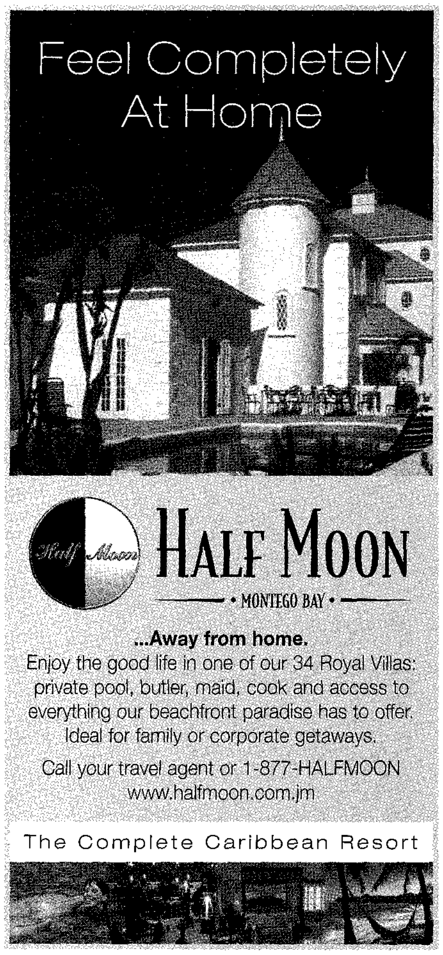
They have reason to be jumpy, though. Writing is a nerve-flaying job. First of all, what the Symbolists said is true: clichés come to the mind much more readily than anything fresh or exact. To hack one's way past them requires a huge, bleeding effort. (For anyone who wonders why seasoned writers tend to write for only about three or four hours a day, that's the answer.) In the same interview in which Anthony Burgess sneered at crybaby Americans, he concluded by saying that a writer can never be happy: "The anxiety involved is intolerable. And . . . the financial rewards just don't make up for the expenditure of energy, the damage to health caused by stimulants and narcotics, the fear that one's work isn't good enough. I think, if I had enough money, I'd give up writing tomorrow."

Apart from the effort, there is the self-exposure. The American reading public knows more about Philip Roth than they know about some of their first-degree relatives, and though Roth may have had some pleasure in that unbaring, it is probably no accident that he now lives in the country, where people are less likely to meet him on the street and tell him what they think of him. (J. D. Salinger also retreated to the woods, shortly after the publication of "The Catcher in the Rye," in 1951. Reportedly, he has gone on writing—there are tales of a room-sized safe filled with manuscripts—but he hasn't published anything in forty years. "Publishing is a terrible invasion of my privacy," he said in a rare interview in 1974.) I can say from experience that even if you are not a novelist, even if you are a reviewer of dance and books, total strangers will come up to you and say that they know how you feel, and not just about dance and books. They are right. You told them how you felt.



Anxiety over self-revelation was probably not as common in the old days, when the exposure was channelled through conventional forms (ode, sonnet) that masked the writer's identity to some extent. In former times, too, art forthrightly answered the audience's emotional needs: tell me a story, sing me a song. Modernism, in refusing to do that duty, may have a lot to answer for in the development of artistic neurosis. If art wasn't going to address the audience's basic needs, then presumably it was doing something finer, more mysterious—something, in other words, that could put the artist into a sweat. As long as art remained, in some measure, artisanal—with, for example, the young Leonardo da Vinci arriving in the morning at Verrocchio's studio and being told to paint in the angel's wing—it must have fostered steadier minds. Still, I wonder whether the artist's task was ever easy. Leonardo's contemporaries reported that his hand shook as he plied the brush. And he left many works unfinished. Freud hypothesized that Leonardo's problems stemmed from the Oedipus complex. (He was born illegitimate; his abandoned mother kissed him too much.) But could they have been due to a less sexy cause—sheer ambition? Competition among Italian artists of the Renaissance was intense. In his later life, Leonardo quit painting for long periods.

Art-making should be a nice job, yet somehow, for many people, it's not. And they don't know why and would rather not think about it. Once, in an unintentionally comic essay, the analyst Donald Kaplan, who was very interested in art, reported ruefully that his artist patients rarely discussed their work with him. If they even mentioned it, they used it only as a chronological marker (" 'It was around the time I was doing those brown paintings' "). All they wanted to talk about was the circumstances around their work: noisy children, obtuse reviewers. And, once Kaplan helped them deal with these matters, they quit treatment. They didn't know and didn't care what underlay their creative function. They just wanted to get back to it, as long as it lasted. ♦



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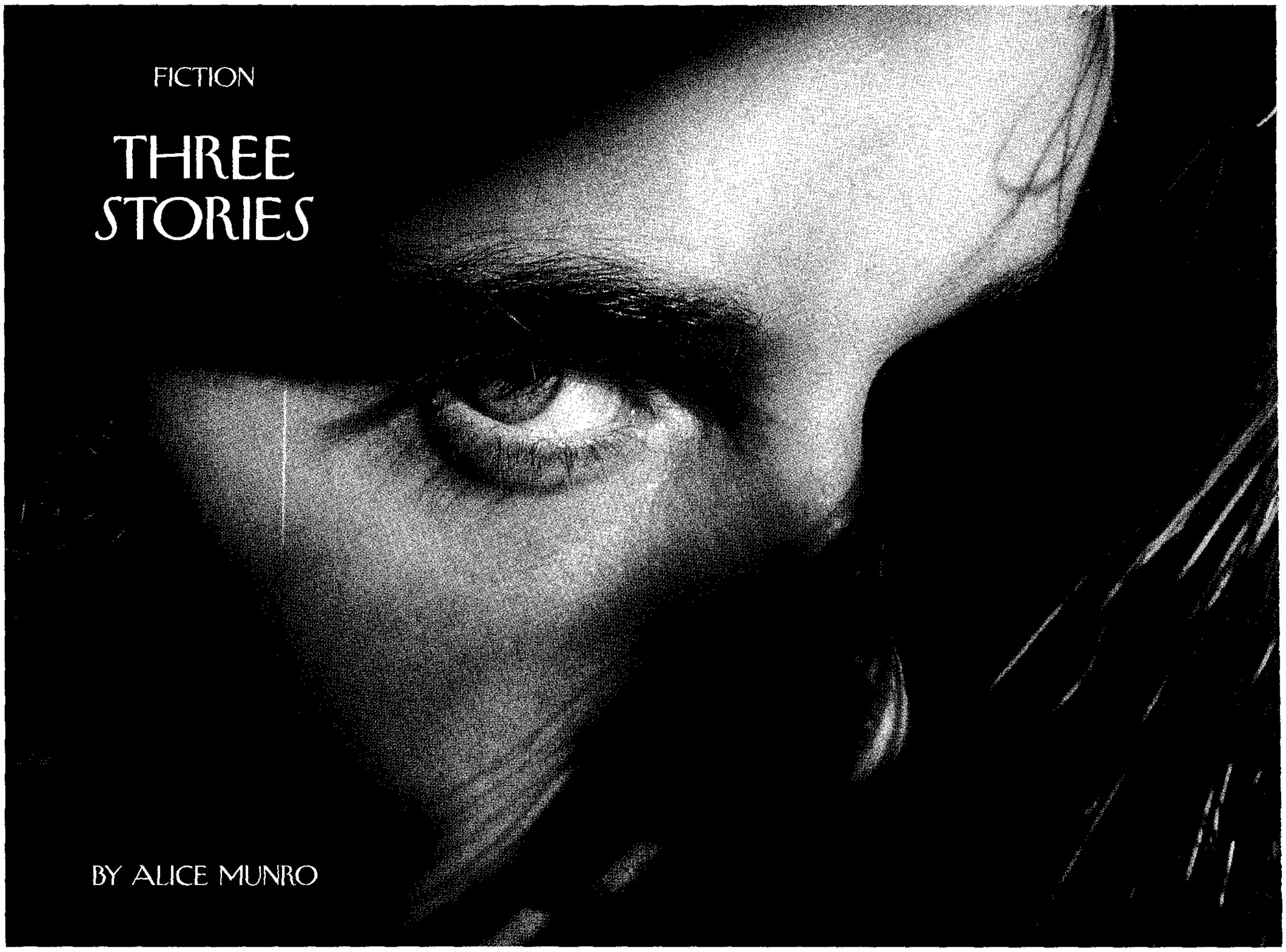
FICTION

THREE STORIES

BY ALICE MUNRO



"HARVEST"/SANDY CARSON GALLERY

CHANCE

Halfway through June of 1965, the term at Torrance House School for Girls is over. Juliet has not been offered a permanent job—the teacher she was replacing has recovered from a bout of depression—and she could now be on her way home. Instead, she is taking what she has described as a little detour. A little detour to see a friend who lives up the coast.

About a month ago, she went with another teacher—Juanita, the only person on the staff who is near her age, and her only friend—to see a revival of a movie called "Hiroshima, Mon Amour." Juanita confessed afterward that she herself, like the woman in the picture, was in love with a married man—the father of one of her students. Then Juliet said that she had found herself in somewhat the same situation but had not allowed things to go on because of the tragic plight of the man's wife, who was a total invalid, more or less brain-dead. Juanita said she wished that her lover's wife were brain-dead, but she was not—she was vigorous and powerful and could get Juanita fired.

And shortly after that, as if conjured up by such unworthy lies or half lies, came a letter. The envelope looked dingy, as if it had spent some time in a pocket, and it was addressed only to Juliet (Teacher), Torrance House, 1482 Mark St., Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Juliet,

I forgot which school it was that you were teaching at but the other day I remembered, out of the blue, so it seemed to me a sign that I should write to you. I hope you are still there but the job would have to be pretty awful for you to quit before the term is up and anyway you didn't strike me as a quitter.

How do you like our West Coast weather? If you think you've got a lot of rain in Vancouver, then imagine twice as much, and that's what we get up here.

I often think of you sitting up looking at the ~~stairs~~ stars. You see, I wrote stairs—it's late at night and time I was in bed.

Ann is about the same. When I got back from my trip I thought she had healed a good deal, but that was mostly because I was able to see all at once how she had gone downhill in the last two or three years.

I'm glad I finally remembered the name of the school but I am awfully afraid now that I can't remember your last name. I will seal the envelope anyway and hope the name comes to me.

I often think of you.
I often think of you
I often think of you
zzzzzz

A bus takes Juliet from downtown Vancouver to Horseshoe Bay and onto a ferry. Then across a mainland peninsula and onto another ferry and onto the mainland again and up to the town where the man who wrote the letter lives. Whale Bay. And how quickly she passes from city to wilderness. All this term she has been living among the lawns and gardens of Kerrisdale, with the north-shore mountains coming into view like a stage backdrop whenever the weather cleared. The grounds of the school were sheltered and civilized, enclosed by a stone wall, and with something in bloom in every season of the year. And the gardens of the houses around it were the same. Such trim abundance—rhododendrons, holly, laurel, and wisteria. But before Juliet gets even as far as Horseshoe Bay, less than an hour away, real forest, not park forest, closes in. And from then on—water and rocks, dark trees, hanging moss. Occasionally, a trail of smoke from some damp and battered-looking little house, with a yard full of firewood, lumber, and tires, cars and parts of cars, bikes, toys—all the things that have to sit outside when people lack garages or basements.

The towns where the bus stops are not organized towns at all. No paved streets, except the highway that goes through, no sidewalks. No big solid buildings to house post offices or municipal offices, no ornamented blocks of stores, built to be noticed. No war monuments, drinking fountains, flowery little parks. Sometimes a hotel that looks as if it were only a pub. Sometimes a modern school or hospital—decent, but low and plain as a shed.

And at some point—noticeably on the second ferry—Juliet begins to have stomach-turning doubts about the whole business.

I often think of you
I often think of you

It is only the sort of thing that people say to be comforting, or out of a mild desire to keep somebody hanging on.

There must be a hotel, or tourist cabins at least, at Whale Bay. She will go there. She has left her big suitcase at the school, to be picked up later. She has only her travelling bag, slung over her shoulder, so she won't be conspicuous. She will stay one night. Maybe phone him.

And say what?

That she happens to be up this way to visit a friend. Her friend Juanita, from the school, who has a summer place—where? This Juanita has a cabin in the woods; she is a fearless outdoors sort of woman (quite unlike the real Juanita, who is seldom out of high heels). And the cabin has turned out to be not far south of Whale Bay. The visit to the cabin and Juanita being over,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHEN ROACH

Juliet thought . . . she thought since she was nearly there already . . . she thought she might as well stop by.

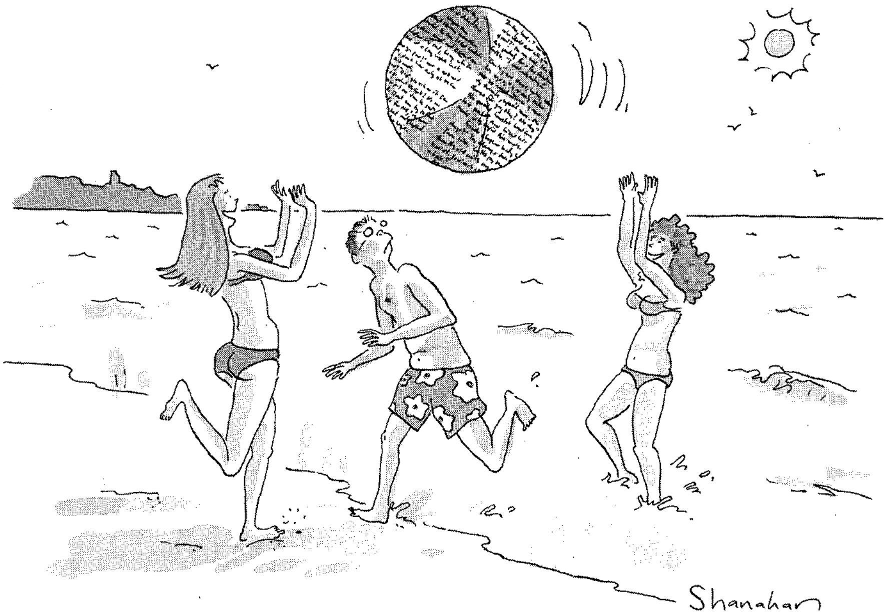
Rocks, trees, water, snow. These things, constantly rearranged, had made up the scene outside the train window six months earlier, on a morning between Christmas and New Year's. The rocks were large, sometimes jutting out, sometimes smooth like boulders, dark gray or quite black. The trees were mostly evergreens, pine or spruce or cedar. The spruce trees—black spruce—had what looked like little extra trees, miniatures of themselves, stuck right on top. The trees that were not evergreens were spindly and bare—they might be poplar or tamarack or alder. Some of them had spotty trunks. Snow sat in thick caps on top of the rocks and was plastered to the windward side of the trees. It lay in a soft smooth cover over the surface of frozen lakes. Water was free of ice only in an occasional fast-flowing, dark, and narrow stream.

Juliet had a book open on her lap, but she was not reading. She did not take her eyes from what was going by. She was alone in a double seat and there was an empty double seat across from her. This was the space in which her bed was made up at night. The porter was busy at the moment, dismantling the car's nighttime arrangements. In some places, the dark-green zippered shrouds still hung down to the floor. There was the smell of that cloth, like tent cloth, and a slight smell of nightclothes and toilets. A blast of fresh winter air whenever anyone opened the doors at either end of the car. The last to rise were going to breakfast now, other people coming back.

There were tracks in the snow, small animal tracks. Strings of beads, looping, vanishing.

Juliet was twenty-one years old and already the possessor of a B.A. and an M.A. in classics. She was working on her Ph.D. thesis in Toronto, but had decided to take some time out to teach Latin at a private girls' school in Vancouver. She had no training as a teacher, but an unexpected vacancy at half-term had made the school willing to hire her. Probably no one else had answered the ad. The salary was less than any qualified teacher would be likely to accept. But Juliet was happy to be earning any money at all, after her years on stingy scholarships.

She was a tall girl, fair-skinned and fine-boned, with light-brown hair that would not retain a bouffant style, even when sprayed. She had the look of an alert schoolgirl. Head held high, a neat rounded chin, wide thin-lipped mouth, snub nose, bright eyes, and a forehead that was often flushed with effort or appreciation. Her professors were delighted with her—they were grateful these days for anybody who took up ancient languages, and particularly for someone so gifted—but they were worried as well. The problem was that she was a girl. If she got married—which might happen, as she was not bad-looking for a scholarship girl, not bad-looking at all—she would waste all her hard work and theirs. And if she did not get married her life would probably become bleak and isolated—she would lose out on promotions to men (who needed them more, since they had families to support). Either way, she would not be able to defend the oddity of her choice, to defy what people would see as the irrelevance, or dreariness, of classics, to slough off that prejudice the way a man could. Odd choices were simply easier for men, most of whom would still find women glad to marry them. Not so the other way around.



BOOKS ON BALLS

When the teaching offer came, her professors urged her to take it. It'll be good for you. Get out into the world a bit. See some real life.

Juliet was used to this sort of advice, though disappointed to hear it coming from these men who did not look or sound as if they had knocked about in the real world very eagerly themselves. In the town where she had grown up, her sort of intelligence was often put in the same category as a limp or an extra thumb, and people had been quick to point out the expected, accompanying drawbacks—her inability to run a sewing machine, or wrap a parcel neatly, or notice that her slip was showing. What would become of her was always the question.

It occurred even to her mother and father, who were nevertheless proud of her. Her mother had wanted her to be popular, and to that end had urged her to learn to skate and to play the piano. Juliet did neither willingly, or well. Her father just wanted her to fit in. "You have to fit in," he told her. "Otherwise people will make your life hell." (He made no mention of the fact that he, and particularly Juliet's mother, did not fit in so very well themselves, and yet were not miserable. Perhaps he feared that Juliet would not be so lucky.)

I do, Juliet said, once she got away to college. In the classics department, I fit in. I am extremely O.K.

But now here came the same message, from her teachers, who had seemed to value and rejoice in her.

Nevertheless, on the train, she was happy.

Taiga, she thought. She did not know whether that was the right word for what she was looking at. She might have had, on some level, the idea of herself as a young woman in a Russian novel, going out into an unfamiliar, a terrifying and exhilarating landscape where the wolves would howl at night and where she would meet her fate. She did not care that, in a Russian novel, that fate would likely turn out to be dreary, or tragic, or both.

Personal fate was not the point, anyway. What drew her in—enchanted her, actually—was the very indifference, the carelessness and contempt for harmony, to be found outside her window on the scrambled surface of the Precambrian Shield.

A shadow appeared in the corner of her eye. Then a trousered leg, moving in.

"Is this seat taken?"

Of course it wasn't. What could she say?

Tasselled loafers, tan slacks, tan-and-brown checked jacket with pencil lines of maroon, dark-blue shirt, maroon tie with flecks of blue and gold. All brand-new, and all—except for the shoes—looking slightly too big, as if the body inside had shrunk somewhat since the purchase.

He was perhaps in his fifties, with strands of bright golden-brown hair plastered across his scalp. (It couldn't be dyed, could it, she wondered. Who would dye such a scanty crop of hair?) His eyebrows darker, reddish, peaked, and bushy. The skin of his face rather lumpy, like the surface of sour milk.

Was he ugly? Yes, of course. He was ugly, but so, in her opinion, were many, many men of his age. She would not have said, afterward, that he was remarkably ugly.

His eyebrows went up, his light-colored, leaky eyes widened, as if to project conviviality. He settled down opposite her. He said, "Not much to see out there."

"No." She lowered her eyes to her book.

"Ah," he said, as if things were opening up in a comfortable way. "And how far are you going?"

"Vancouver."

"Me, too. All the way across the country. May as well see it all while you're at it, isn't that right?"

"Mmm."

But he persisted.

"So. Did you get on in Toronto, too?"

"Yes."

"That's my home, Toronto. I've lived there all my life. You, too?"

"No," Juliet said, looking at her book again and trying hard to prolong the pause. But something—her upbringing, her embarrassment, God knows, perhaps her pity—was too strong for her, and she dealt out the name of her home town, then placed it for him by giving its distance from various larger towns, its position relative to Lake Huron, Georgian Bay.

"I've got a cousin in Collingwood. That's nice country up there. I went up to see her and her family a couple of times. You travelling on your own? Like me?"

He kept flapping his hands one over the other.

"Yes."

No more, she thought. No more.

"This is the first time I've gone on a major trip anywhere. Quite a trip, all on your own."

Juliet said nothing.

"I just saw you there reading your book all by yourself, and I thought, Maybe she's all by herself and got a long way to go, too, so maybe we could just sort of chum around together?"

At those words, "chum around," a cold turbulence rose in Juliet. She understood that he was not trying to pick her up. One of the demoralizing things that sometimes happened to her was that rather awkward and lonely and unattractive men would make a bald bid for her, implying that she had to be in the same boat as they were. But this man wasn't doing that. He wanted a friend, not a girlfriend. He wanted a *chum*.

Juliet knew that, to many people, she might seem to be odd and solitary—and so, in a way, she was. But she had also had the experience, for much of her life, of being surrounded by people who wanted to drain away her attention and her time and her soul. And usually she let them.

Be available, be friendly (especially if you are not *popular*)—that was what you learned in a small town and also in a girls' dormitory. Be accommodating to all those who want to suck you dry, even if they know nothing about who you are.

She looked straight at this man and did not smile. He saw her resolve, and there was a twitch of alarm in his face.

"Good book you got there? What's it about?"

She was not going to say that it was about ancient Greece and the considerable attachment that the Greeks had to the irrational. (She was supposed to be teaching a course on Greek Thought, so she was reading Eric Dodds again to see what she could pick up.) She said, "I do want to read. I think I'll go to the observation car."

And she got up and walked away, thinking that she shouldn't have told him where she was going—it was possible that he might get up and follow her, apologizing, working up to another plea. Also, it would be cold in the observation car, and she would wish that she had brought her sweater. Impossible to go back now and get it.

The wraparound view from the observation car, at the back of the train, seemed less satisfying to her than the view from the sleeping-car window. There was now the intrusion of the train itself in front of her.

Perhaps the problem was that she was cold, just as she had thought she would be. And disturbed. But not sorry. One moment more and his clammy hand would have been proffered—she knew that it would have been either clammy or dry and scaly—names would have been exchanged, she would have been locked in. It was the first victory of this sort that she had ever achieved, and it was against the most pitiable, the saddest opponent. She could hear him now, chewing on the words "chum around." Apology and insolence. Apology his habit. And insolence the result of some hope or determination breaking the surface of his loneliness, his hungry state.

There were only two other people in the observation car. Two older women, each of them sitting alone. When Juliet saw a large wolf crossing the snowy, perfect surface of a small lake, she knew that they must have seen it, too. But neither broke the silence, and that was pleasing to her. The wolf took no notice of the train. He did not hesitate or hurry. His fur was long, silver shading into white. Did he think it made him invisible?

While she was watching the wolf, another passenger arrived. A man, who took the seat opposite hers. He, too, carried a book. An elderly couple followed—she small and sprightly, he large and clumsy, taking heavy, disparaging breaths.

"Cold up here," he said, when they were settled.

"Do you want me to go get your jacket?"

"Don't bother."

"It's no bother."

"I'll be all right."

In a moment the woman said, "You certainly do get a view here." He did not answer, and she tried again. "You can see all round."

"What there is to see."

"Wait till we go through the mountains. That'll be something. Did you enjoy your breakfast?"

"The eggs were runny."

"I know." The woman laughed. "I was thinking I should just have barged into the kitchen and done them myself."

"Galley. They call it a galley."

"I thought that was on a boat."

Juliet and the man across the aisle raised their eyes from their books at the same moment, and their glances met, with a calm withholding of expression. And in this second or two the train slowed, then stopped, and they looked elsewhere.

They had come to a little settlement in the woods. On one side was the station, painted a dark red, and on the other a few houses painted the same color. Homes or barracks, for the railway workers. It was announced that the train would stop here for ten minutes.

The station platform had been cleared of snow, and Juliet, peering ahead, saw some people getting off the train to walk about. She would have liked to do this, too, but not without a coat.

The man across the aisle got up and went down the steps, without a look around. Doors opened somewhere below, letting in a stealthy stream of cold air. The elderly husband asked what they were doing here, and what was the name of this place, anyway. His wife went to the front of the car to try to read the sign on the platform, but she was not successful.

Juliet was reading about maenadism. The rituals took place at night, in the middle of winter, Dodds said. The women went up to the top of Mt. Parnassus, and one time, when they were cut off by a snowstorm, a rescue party had to be sent. The would-be maenads were brought down with their clothes stiff as boards, having, in all their frenzy, accepted rescue. This seemed like rather contemporary behavior to Juliet—it cast a modern light on the maenads' carrying-on. Would her students see it that way? Not likely. They would probably be armed against any possible entertainment, any involvement in their studies, as students were. And the ones who weren't so armed wouldn't want to show it.

The call to board sounded; the fresh air was cut off; there were reluctant shunting movements. She raised her eyes to watch, and saw, some distance ahead, the engine disappearing around a curve.

And then a lurch or a shudder, a shudder that seemed to pass along the whole train. A sense of the car rocking. An abrupt stop.

Everybody sat waiting for the train to start again, and nobody spoke. Even the complaining husband was silent. Minutes passed. Doors were opening and closing. Men's voices calling, a spreading feeling of fright and agitation. In the club car, which was just below the observation car, a voice of authority could be heard—maybe the conductor's. But it was not possible to make out what he was saying.

Juliet got up and went to the front of the car, trying to see over the tops of all the cars ahead. She saw some figures running in the snow.

One of the lone women came up and stood beside her.

"I felt that something was going to happen," the woman said. "I felt it back there, when we were stopped. I didn't want us to start up again. I thought something was going to happen."

The other woman had come to stand behind them.

"It won't be anything," she said. "Maybe a branch across the tracks."

"They have that thing that goes ahead of the train," the first woman told her. "It goes on purpose to catch things like a branch across the tracks."

"Maybe it had just fallen."

Both women spoke with the same North of England accent and without the politeness of strangers or acquaintances. Now that Juliet got a good look at them, she saw that they were probably sisters, though one had a younger, broader face. So they travelled together but sat separately. Or perhaps they'd had a row.

The conductor was mounting the stairs to the observation car. He turned, halfway up, to speak. "Nothing serious to worry about, folks. It seems like we hit an obstacle on the track. We're sorry for the delay and we'll get going again as soon as we can, but we could be here a little while. The steward tells me there's going to be free coffee down here in a few minutes."

Juliet followed him down the stairs. She had become aware, as soon as she stood up, that she had a problem of her own that would require her to go back to her seat and her travelling case, whether the man she had snubbed was still there or not. Monthly bleeding was the bane of her life; it had even, on occasion, interfered with the writing of important examinations, because she couldn't leave the room for reinforcements.

As she made her way through the cars, she met other people on the move. People were pressing against the windows on one side of the train, or they had halted between the cars, as if they expected the doors to open. Juliet had no time to ask questions, but as she slid past she heard that it might have been a bear, or an elk, or a cow. And people wondered what a cow would be doing up here in the bush, or why the bears were not all hibernating now, or if some drunk had passed out on the tracks.

In the dining car, people were sitting at the tables, whose white cloths had all been removed, drinking the free coffee.

Nobody was in Juliet's seat, or in the seat across from it. She picked up her case and hurried along to the ladies'.

Flushed, crampy, feeling a little dizzy, she sank down onto the toilet bowl, removed her soaked pad, and wrapped it in toilet paper, then put it in the receptacle provided. When she stood up, she attached the fresh pad from her bag. She saw that the water and urine in the bowl were crimson with her blood. She put her hand on the flush button, then noticed at eye level the warning not to flush the toilet while the train was standing still. That meant, of course, when the train was standing in a station, where the discharge would take place, disagreeably, right where people could see it. Here she might risk it.

But just as she touched the button again she heard voices close by, not in the train but outside the window of pebbled glass. Maybe train workers walking past.

She could stay until the train moved, but how long would that be? And what if somebody desperately wanted to get in? She decided that all she could do was put down the lid and leave.

She went back to her own seat. Across from her, a child of four or five was mashing a crayon across the pages of a coloring book. His mother spoke to Juliet about the free coffee.

"It may be free, but it looks like you have to go and get it," she said. "Would you mind watching him while I go?"

"I don't want to stay with her," the child said, without looking up.

"I'll go," Juliet said. But at that moment a waiter entered the car, with the coffee wagon.

"There. I shouldn't have complained so soon," the mother said. "Did you hear it was a B-O-D-Y?"

Juliet shook her head.

"He didn't have his coat on, even. Somebody saw him get off and walk on ahead, but they didn't realize what he was doing. He must've got just round the curve, so the engineer couldn't see him till it was too late."

A few seats ahead, a man said, "Here they come back," and some people got up and stooped to see. The child stood up, too, pressed his face to the glass. His mother told him to sit down. "You color. Look at the mess you've made, all over the lines."

"I can't look," she said to Juliet. "I can't stand to look at anything like that."

Juliet got up and looked. She saw a small group of men tramping back toward the station, carrying a stretcher. Some had taken off their coats and laid them over it.

"You can't see anything," a man behind Juliet said to a woman who had not stood up. "They've got him all covered."

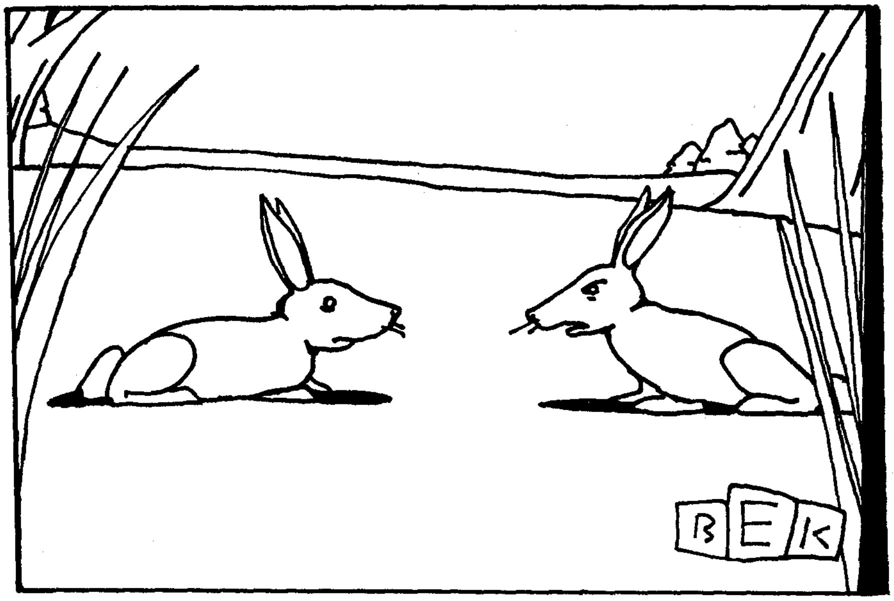
Not all of the men who proceeded with their heads lowered were railway employees. Juliet recognized the man who had sat across from her, up in the observation car.

After ten or fifteen minutes more, the train began to move. Around the curve there was no blood to be seen, on either side of the car. But there was a trampled area, a shovelled mound of snow. The man behind her was up again. He said, "That's where it happened, I guess," and watched for a little while to see if there was anything else, then turned around and sat down.

The train, instead of speeding to make up for lost time, seemed to be going more slowly than before. Out of respect, perhaps, or with apprehension about what might lie ahead, around the next curve. The headwaiter went through the car announcing the first seating for lunch, and the mother and child at once got up and followed him. A procession began, and Juliet heard a woman who was passing say, "Really?"

The woman talking to her said, "That's what she said. Full of blood. So it must have splashed in when the train went over—"

"Don't say it."



"You think I'm a raw-foodist by choice?"

A little later, the man came through—the man from the observation car, whom Juliet had seen outside, walking in the snow.

She got up and quickly pursued him. In the black cold space between the cars, just as he was pushing the heavy door in front of him, she said, "Excuse me. I have to ask you something."

This space was full of sudden noise, the clanking of heavy wheels on the rails.

"What is it?"

"Are you a doctor? Did you see the man who—"

"I'm not a doctor. There's no doctor on the train. But I have some medical experience."

"How old was he?"

The man looked at her with a steady patience and some displeasure. "Hard to say. Not young."

"Was he wearing a blue shirt? Did he have blondish-brown hair?"

He shook his head, not to answer her question but to refuse it. "Was this somebody you knew?" he said. "You should tell the conductor if it was."

"I didn't know him."

"Excuse me, then." He pushed open the door and left her.

Of course. He thought she was full of disgusting curiosity, like all the other people.

"Full of blood." *That* was disgusting, if anything was. She could never tell anybody about the mistake that had been made, the horrid joke of it. People would think her exceptionally crude and heartless were she ever to speak of it. And what was at one end of the misunderstanding—the suicide's smashed body—would be seen, in the telling, to be hardly more foul and frightful than her own menstrual blood.

Never tell. (Actually, she did tell this a few years later, to a woman named Christa, a woman whose name she did not yet know.)

But she wanted very much to tell somebody something. She got out her notebook and on one of its ruled pages began to write a letter to her parents.

> We have not yet reached the Manitoba border and most people have been complaining that the scenery is rather monotonous, but they cannot say that the trip has been lacking in dramatic incident. This morning we stopped at some godforsaken little settlement in the northern woods, all painted Dreary Railway Red. I was sitting at the back of the

> train in the observation car, and freezing to death because they skimp on the heat up there (the idea must be that the scenic glories will distract you from your discomfort) and I was too lazy to trudge back and get my sweater. We sat around there for ten or fifteen minutes and then started up again, and I could see the engine rounding a curve up ahead, and then suddenly there was a sort of Awful Thump.

She and her parents had always made it their business to bring entertaining stories into the house. This had required of Juliet a subtle adjustment not only of the facts but of her position in the world. At least, when her world was school. She had made herself, for her parents' amusement, into a rather superior, invulnerable observer. And now this stance had become habitual, almost a duty.

But as soon as she had written the words "Awful Thump" she found herself unable to go on. Unable, in her customary language, to go on.

She tried looking out the window, but the scene, although it was composed of the same elements as before, had changed. Less than a hundred miles on, the train seemed to have entered a warmer climate. The lakes were only fringed with ice, not covered. The black water, black rocks, under the wintry clouds, filled the air with darkness. She grew tired, watching, and she picked up Dodds, opening it at random, because after all she had read it before. Every few pages she seemed to have had an orgy of underlining. She was drawn to these passages now, but when she read them she found that what she had pounced on with such satisfaction, at one time, on rereading seemed obscure and unsettling.

> *. . . what to the partial vision of the living appears as the act of a fiend is perceived by the wider insight of the dead to be an aspect of cosmic justice. . . .*

The book slipped out of her hands, her eyes closed, and she was now walking with some children (students?) on the surface of a lake. Everywhere each of them stepped there appeared a five-sided crack, all of these beautifully even so that the ice became like a tiled floor. The children asked her the name of these ice tiles, and she answered with confidence, "Iambic pentameter." But they laughed, and as they did the cracks widened. She realized her mistake then and knew that only the right word would save the situation, but she could not get hold of it.

She awoke and saw the same man, the man she had followed and pestered between the cars, sitting across from her.

"You were sleeping." He smiled slightly at what he had said. "Obviously."

She had been sleeping with her head hanging forward, like an old woman, and there was a dribble at the corner of her mouth. Also, she realized she had to get to the ladies' toilet at once. She said, "Excuse me" (just what he had last said to her), took up her case, and, hoping there was nothing on her skirt, walked away with as little self-conscious haste as she could manage.

When she came back, he was still there.

He spoke at once. He said that he wanted to apologize. "It occurred to me that I was rude to you. When you asked me—"

"Yes," she said.

"You had it right," he said. "The way you described him."

This seemed less an offering, on his part, than a direct and necessary transaction. If she did not care to respond, he might just get up and walk away, not particularly disappointed, having done what he'd come to do.

Shamefully, Juliet's eyes overflowed with tears. This was so unexpected that she did not have time to look away.

"O.K.," he said. "It's O.K."

She nodded quickly, several times, sniffled wretchedly, and blew her nose on the tissue she eventually found in her bag.

"It's all right," she said, and then she told him, in a straightforward way, just what had happened. How the man had bent over and asked her if the seat was taken, how he'd sat down, how she'd been looking out the window and how she hadn't been able to do that any longer, so she had tried or had pretended to read her book, how he had asked where she'd got on the train, and found out where she lived, and kept trying to make headway with the conversation, until she just picked up and left.

The only thing she did not reveal was the expression "chum around." She had a notion that if she were to say it she would burst into tears all over again.

"People interrupt women," the man said. "Easier than men."

"Yes. They do."

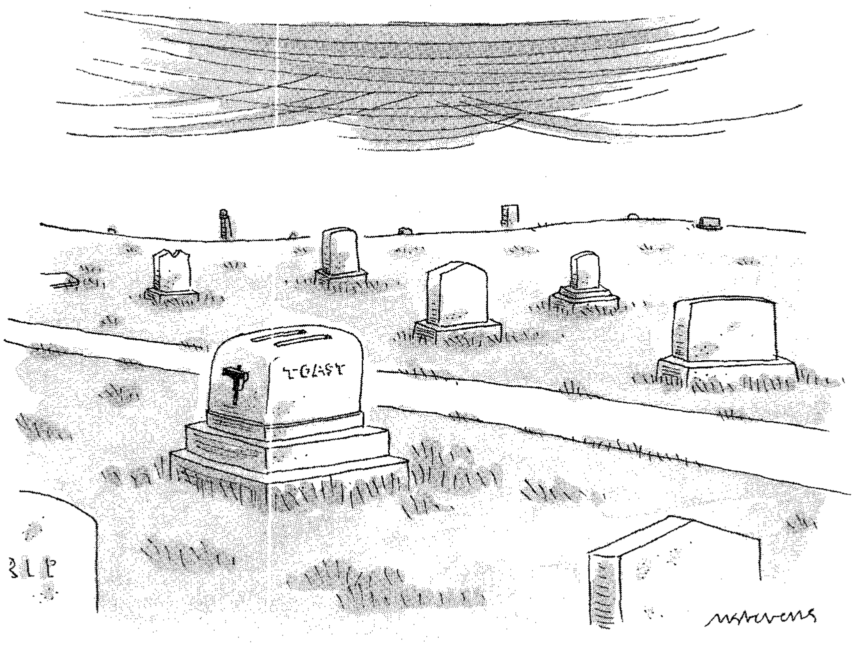
"They think women are bound to be nicer."

"But he just wanted somebody to talk to," she said, shifting sides a little. "He wanted somebody worse than I *didn't* want somebody. I realize that now. And I don't look mean. I don't look cruel. But I was."

A pause, while she again got her sniffling and her leaky eyes under control.

He said, "Haven't you ever wanted to do that to anybody before?"

"*Yes.* But I've never done it. I've never gone so far. And why I did it this time—it was because he was so humble. And he had all new clothes on that he'd probably bought for the trip. He was probably depressed and thought that travelling would be a good way to meet people and make friends. Maybe if he'd just been going a



little way—" she added. "But he said he was going to Vancouver and I would have been saddled with him. For days."

"Yes."

"I really might have been."

"Yes."

"So."

"Rotten luck," he said, smiling a very little. "The first time you get up the nerve to give somebody the gears he throws himself under a train."

"It may have been the last straw," she said, now feeling slightly defensive. "It may have been."

"I guess you'll just have to watch out, in future."

Juliet raised her chin and looked at him steadily. "You mean I'm exaggerating."

Then something happened that was as sudden and unbidden as her tears. Her mouth began to twitch. Unholy laughter was rising.

"I guess it is a little extreme," she said.

He said, "A little."

"You think I'm dramatizing?"

"It's natural."

"But you think it's a mistake," she said, her laughter now under control. "You think feeling guilty is just an indulgence?"

"What I think—" he said. "I think that this is minor. Things will happen in your life—things will probably happen in your life—that will make this seem minor. Other things you'll be able to feel guilty about."

"Don't people always say that, though? To somebody who is younger? They say, 'Oh, you won't feel that way someday. You wait and see.' As if you didn't have a right to any serious feelings. As if you weren't capable."

"Feelings," he said. "I was talking about experience."

"But you are sort of saying that guilt isn't any use. People do say that. Is it true?"

"You tell me."

They went on talking about this for a considerable time, in low voices, but so forcefully that people passing through the car sometimes looked surprised, or even offended, as people can when they overhear debates that seem unnecessarily abstract. Juliet realized, after a while, that though she was arguing—rather well, she thought—for the necessity of some sense of guilt in both public and private life, she had stopped feeling any for the moment. You might even have said that she was enjoying herself.

He suggested that they go forward, to the lounge, where they could drink coffee. Once there, Juliet discovered that she was quite hungry, though the lunch hours were long over. Pretzels and peanuts were all that could be procured, and she gobbled them up in such a way that the thoughtful, slightly competitive conversation they'd been having before was not retrievable. So they talked instead about themselves.

His name was Eric Porteous. He lived in a place called Whale Bay, somewhere north of Vancouver, on the West Coast. But he was not going directly there; he was breaking the trip in Regina, to see some people he had not seen for a long time. He was a fisherman; he caught prawns. She asked about the medical experience he had referred to, and he said, "Oh, it's not very extensive. I did some medical study. When you're out in the bush or on the boat, anything can happen. To the people you're working with. Or to yourself."

He was married. His wife's name was Ann.

Eight years ago, he said, Ann had been injured in a car accident. For several weeks she'd been in a coma. She'd come out of that, but she was still paralyzed, unable to walk or even to feed herself. She seemed to know who he was, and who the woman who looked after her was—with the help of this woman, he was able to keep her at home—but her attempts to talk, and to understand what was going on around her, had soon faded away.

They had been to a party the night she was hurt. She hadn't particularly wanted to go, but he had. Then she'd decided to walk home by herself, not being very happy with things at the party.

It was a gang of drunks from another party who'd run off the road and knocked her down. Teen-agers.

Luckily, he and Ann had had no children. Yes, luckily.

"You tell people about it and they feel they have to say, 'How terrible. What a tragedy.' Et cetera."

"Can you blame them?" said Juliet, who had been about to say something of the sort herself.

No, he said. But it was just that the whole thing was a lot more complicated than that. Did Ann feel that it was a tragedy? Probably not. Did he? It was something you got used to; it was a new kind of life. That was all.

All of Juliet's enjoyable experience of men had been in fantasy: one or two movie stars; the lovely tenor—not the virile heartless hero—on a certain old recording of "Don Giovanni"; Henry V, as she'd read about him in Shakespeare and as Laurence Olivier had played him in the movie.

In actual life there had been humiliation and disappointment, which she had tried to push out of her mind as quickly as possible.

There was the experience of being stranded head and shoulders above the gaggle of other unwanted girls at the high-school dances, and making a rash attempt to be lively on college dates with boys she didn't much like, who did not much like her. Going out with the visiting nephew of her thesis adviser the year before, and being broken into—you couldn't call it rape; she, too, had been determined to make it happen—late at night on the ground in Willis Park. On the way home, he had explained that she wasn't his type. And she had felt too humiliated to retort—or even to be aware, at that moment—that he was not hers, either.

She had never had fantasies about a particular, real man—least of all about any of her teachers. Older men—in real life—seemed to her to be slightly unsavory.

This man was how old? He had been married for at least eight years—and perhaps two or three years more than that. Which made him probably thirty-five or thirty-six. His hair was dark and curly with some gray at the sides, his forehead wide and weathered, his shoulders strong and a little stooped. He was hardly any taller than she was. His eyes were wide-set, dark, and eager, but also wary. His chin was rounded, dimpled, pugnacious.

She told him about her job, the name of the school. She told him that she was not a real teacher but that they were glad to get someone who had majored in Greek and Latin at college. Hardly anybody did, anymore.

"So why did you?"

"Oh, just to be different, I guess."

Then she told him what she had always known she should never tell any man or boy, lest he lose interest immediately.

"And because I love it. I love all this stuff. I really do."

They ate dinner together—each drinking a glass of wine—and then went up to the observation car, where they sat in the dark, all by themselves. Juliet had brought her sweater this time.

"People must think there's nothing to see up here at night," he said. "But look at the stars you can see on a clear night."

Indeed the night was clear. There was no moon—at least not yet—and the stars appeared in dense thickets, both faint and bright. And, like anyone who has lived and worked on boats, he was familiar with the map of the sky. She was able to locate only the Big Dipper.

"That's your start," he said. "Take the two stars on the side of the Dipper opposite the handle. Got them? Those are the pointers. Follow them up, and you'll find the polestar." And so on.

He found for her Orion, which he said was the major constellation in the Northern Hemisphere in winter. And Sirius, the Dog Star—at that time of year the brightest star in the northern sky.

Juliet was pleased to be instructed but also pleased when it came her turn to be the instructor. He knew the names but not the history.

She told him that Orion had been blinded by Enopion but got his sight back by looking at the sun. "He was blinded because he was so beautiful, but Hephaestus came to his rescue. Then he was killed anyway, by Artemis, but he got changed into a constellation. It often happened that when really valuable people got into bad trouble they were changed into constellations. Where is Cassiopeia?"

He directed her to a not very obvious W.

"That was on account of beauty, too," she said.

"Beauty was dangerous?"

"You bet. She was married to the King of Ethiopia and she was the mother of Andromeda. She bragged about her beauty, and for punishment she was banished to the sky. Isn't there an Andromeda, too?"

Even when guiding her, telling her where to look in the sky, he never touched her. Of course not. He was married.

Whale Bay.

There is a long dock, a number of large boats, a gas station and store with a sign in the window saying that it is also the bus stop and the post office.

A car parked at the side of this store has in its window a homemade taxi sign. She stands just where she stepped down from the bus. The bus pulls away. The taxi toots its horn. The driver gets out and comes toward her.

"All by yourself?" he says. "Where are you headed for?"

She asks if there is a place where tourists stay. Obviously there isn't a hotel.

"I don't know if there's anybody renting rooms out this year. I could ask them inside. You don't know anybody around here?"

Nothing to do but say Eric's name.

"Oh, sure," he says, with relief. "Hop in, we'll get you there in no time. But it's too bad—you pretty well missed the wake."

At first she thinks that he said "wait." Or "weight"? She thinks of fishing competitions.

"Sad time," the driver says, now getting in behind the wheel. "Still, she wasn't ever going to get any better."

Wake. The wife. Ann.

"Never mind," he says. "I expect there'll still be some people hanging around. Of course, the funeral was yesterday. It was a monster. Couldn't get away?"

Juliet says, "No."

"I shouldn't be calling it a wake, should I? Wake is what you have before you're buried. I don't know what you call what takes place after. You wouldn't want to call it a party, would you? I can just run you up and show you all the flowers and tributes, O.K.?"

Inland, off the highway, after a quarter of a mile or so of rough dirt road, is Whale Bay Union Cemetery. And close to the fence is a mound of earth altogether buried in flowers. Faded real flowers, bright artificial flowers, a little wooden cross with the name and date. Tinselly curled ribbons have blown about, all over the cemetery grass. The driver draws her attention to all the ruts, the mess made by the wheels of so many cars yesterday.

"Half of them had never even seen her. But they knew him, so they wanted to come anyway. Everybody knows Eric."

They turn around, drive back, but not all the way to the highway. Juliet wants to tell the driver that she has changed her mind—she does not want to visit anybody, she wants to wait at the store and catch the bus going the other way. She can say that she really did get the day wrong, and now she is so ashamed of having missed the funeral that she does not want to show up at all.

But she cannot get started. And he will report on her, no matter what.

They are following narrow, winding back roads. Every time they pass a driveway without turning in, there is a feeling of reprieve.

"Well, here's a surprise," the driver says, and now they do turn in. "Where's everybody gone? Half a dozen cars when I drove past an hour ago. Even his truck's gone. Party over. Sorry—I shouldn't have said that."

"If there's nobody here," Juliet says eagerly, "I could just go back down."

"Oh, somebody's here, don't worry about that. Ailo's here. There's her bike. You ever meet Ailo? You know, she's the one who took care of things?"

As soon as Juliet steps out, a large yellow dog comes bounding and barking, and a woman calls from the porch of the house.

"Aw, go on, Pet," the driver says, pocketing the fare.

"Shut up. Shut up, Pet. Settle down. She won't hurt you," the woman calls. "She's just a pup."

Pet's being a pup, Juliet thinks, does not make her any less likely to knock you down. And now a small reddish-brown dog arrives to join in the commotion. The woman comes down the steps, yelling, "Pet! Corky! You behave. If they think you are scared of them, they will just get after you the worse."

Her "just" sounds something like "chust."

"I'm not scared," Juliet says, jumping back when the yellow dog's nose touches her arm.

"Come on in, then. Shut up, the two of you, or I will knock your heads. Did you get the day mixed up for the funeral?"

Juliet shakes her head as if to say that she is sorry. She introduces herself.

"Well, it is too bad. I am Ailo." They shake hands.

Ailo is a tall, broad-shouldered woman with a thick but not flabby body and yellowish-white hair loose over her shoulders. Her voice is strong and insistent, with some rich production of sounds in the throat. A German, Dutch, Scandinavian accent?

"You better sit down here in the kitchen. Everything is in a mess. I will get you some coffee."

The kitchen is bright, with a skylight in the high, sloping ceiling. Dishes and glasses and pots are piled everywhere. Pet and Corky have followed Ailo meekly into the kitchen, and have started to lap up whatever is in the roasting pan that she has set down on the floor. Beyond the kitchen, up two broad steps, there is a shaded, cavernous sort of living room, with large cushions flung about on the floor.

Ailo pulls out a chair at the table. "Now, sit down. You sit down here and have some coffee and some food."

"I'm fine without," Juliet says.

"No. There is the coffee I have just made—I will drink mine while I work. And there are so much things left over to eat."

She sets before Juliet, with the coffee, a piece of pie, bright green, covered with some shrunken meringue.

"Lime Jell-O," she says, withholding approval. "Maybe it tastes all right, though. Or there is rhubarb?"

Juliet says, "This is fine."

"So much mess here. I clean up after the wake, I get it all settled. Then the funeral. Now after the funeral I have to clean up all over again."

Her voice is full of sturdy grievance. Juliet feels obliged to say, "When I finish this, I can help you."

"No. I don't think so," Ailo says. "I know everything." She is moving around not swiftly but purposefully and effectively. She continues drying the dishes, putting what she has dried away in cupboards and drawers. Then scraping the pots and pans—including the one she retrieves from the dogs—submerging them in fresh soapy water, scrubbing the surfaces of the table and the counters, wringing the dishcloths as if they were chickens' necks. And speaking to Juliet, with pauses.

"You are a friend of Ann? You know her from before?"

"No."

"No. I think you don't. You are too young. So why do you want to come to her funeral?"

"I didn't," Juliet says. "I didn't know. I just came by to visit." She tries to sound as if this were a whim of hers, as if she had lots of friends and wandered about making casual visits.

"Stan is one of our great, widely unread literary treasures."

With singular energy and defiance, Ailo chooses not to reply to this. She lets Juliet wait through several more pots before she speaks.

"You come to visit Eric. You found the right house. Eric lives here."

"You don't live here, do you?" Juliet asks, as if this might change the subject.

"No. I do not live here. I live down the hill, with my husband." The word "husband" carries a weight, of pride and reproach.

Without asking, Ailo refills Juliet's coffee cup, then her own. She brings a piece of pie for herself. It has a rosy layer on the bottom and a creamy layer on top.

"Rhubarb custard. It has to be eaten or it will go bad. I do not need it, but I eat it anyway. Maybe I get you a piece?"

"No. Thank you."

"Now. Eric has gone. He will not be back tonight. I do not think so. He has gone to Christa's place. Do you know Christa?"

Juliet tightly shakes her head.

"Here we all live so that we know the other people's situations. I do not know what it is like where you live. In Vancouver?" Juliet nods. "In a city. It is not the same. For Eric to be so good to look after his wife he must need help, do you see? I am one to help him."

Quite unwisely, Juliet says, "But do you not get paid?"

"Certain I am paid. But it is more than a job. Also the other kind of help from a woman, he needs that, too. Do you understand what I am saying? Not a woman with a husband, I do not believe in that—it is not nice, that is a way to have fights. First Eric had Sandra, then she has moved away, and now he has Christa. Christa is an artist. She makes things out of wood that you find on the beach. What is it you call that wood?"

"Driftwood," Juliet says unwillingly. She is paralyzed by disappointment, by shame.

"That is it. She takes them to places and they sell them for her. Big things. Animals and birds but not realist. Not realist?"

"Not realistic?"

"Yes. Yes. Eric has told you this? Would you like more coffee? There is still some in the pot."

"No. No, thanks. No, he hasn't."

"So. Now I have told you. If you have finish, I will take the cup to wash."

She detours to nudge with her shoe the yellow dog, who is lying on the other side of the refrigerator.

"You got to get up. Lazy girl. Soon we are going home. There is a bus goes back to Vancouver—it goes through at ten after eight," she says, busy at the sink with her back to Juliet. "You can come home with me, and when it is time my husband will drive you. You can eat with us. I ride my bike—I ride slow so you can keep up. It is not far."

The immediate future seems set in place so firmly that Juliet gets up without a thought, looks around for her bag. Then she sits down again, but in another chair. This new view of the kitchen gives her resolve.

"I think I'll stay here," she says.

"Here?"

"I don't have anything much to carry. I'll walk to the bus."

"How will you know your way? It is a mile."

"That's not far." Juliet wonders about knowing the way, but thinks that, after all, you just have to head downhill.

"He is not coming back, you know," Ailo says. "Not tonight."

"That doesn't matter."

Ailo gives a huge, perhaps disdainful, shrug.

"Get up, Pet. Up." Over her shoulder she says, "Corky stays here. Do you want her in or out?"

"I guess out."

"I will tie her up, then, so she cannot follow. She may not want to stay with a stranger."

Juliet says nothing.

"The door locks when we go out. You see? So if you go out and want to come back in, you have to press this. But when you leave you don't press. It will be locked. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"We did not use to bother locking here, but now there are too many strangers."

While they were looking at the stars, the train reached Winnipeg, where it stopped for a while. They got out and walked in a wind so cold that it was painful for them to breathe, let alone speak. When they boarded the train again, they sat in the lounge and he ordered brandy.

"Warm us up and put you to sleep," he said.

He was not going to sleep. He would sit up until he got off at Regina, sometime toward morning.

Most of the berths were already made up, the dark-green curtains narrowing the aisles, when he walked her back to her car. All the cars had names, and the name of hers was Miramichi.

"This is it," she whispered, in the space between the cars, his hand already pushing the door for her.

"Say goodbye here, then." He withdrew his hand, and they balanced themselves against the jolting so that he could kiss her thoroughly. When that was finished, he did not let go, but held her and stroked her back, and then began to kiss her all over her face.

But she pulled away. She said urgently, "I'm a virgin."

"Yes, yes." He laughed, and kissed her neck, then released her and pushed the door open in front of her. They walked down the aisle until she located her berth. She flattened herself against the curtain, turning, rather expecting him to kiss her again or touch her, but he slid by almost as if they had met by accident.

How stupid, how disastrous. Afraid, of course, that his stroking hand would go farther down and reach the knot she had made, securing the pad to the belt. If she had been the sort of girl who could rely on tampons, this would never have happened.

And why virgin? When she had gone to such unpleasant lengths, in Willis Park, to insure that that condition would not be an impediment? She had needed to tell him something—she would never be able to tell him that she was menstruating—in case he hoped to carry things further. But how could he have done so, anyway? How, where? In her berth, with so little room and all the other passengers likely still awake around them? Standing up, swaying back and forth, pressed against a door, which anybody could come along and open, in that precarious space between the cars?

So now he could tell someone how he had listened all evening to this fool girl showing off what she knew about Greek mythology, and in the end—when he finally kissed her good night, to get rid of her—she'd started screaming that she was a virgin.

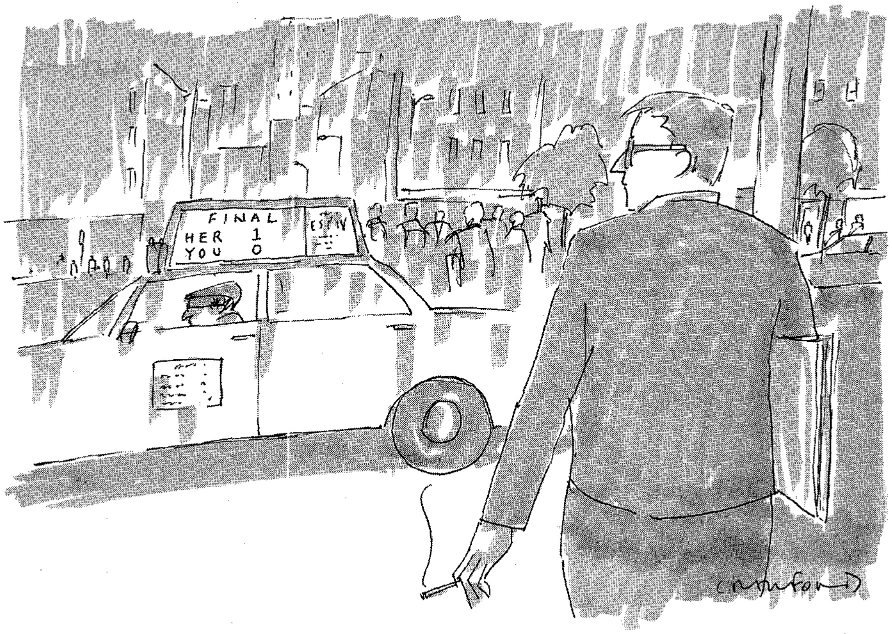
He had not seemed the sort of man to do that, to talk like that, but she could not help imagining it.

She lay awake far into the night, but had fallen asleep by the time the train stopped at Regina.

Left alone, Juliet could explore the house. But she does no such thing. It is twenty minutes, at least, before she can be rid of the presence of Ailo. It isn't that she is afraid that Ailo will come back to check up on her, or to get something she has forgotten. Ailo is not the sort of person who forgets things, even at the end of a strenuous day. And if she had thought that Juliet would steal anything she would simply have kicked her out.

She is, however, the sort of woman who lays claim to space, particularly to kitchen space. Everything within Juliet's gaze speaks of Ailo's occupation, from the potted plants (herbs?) on the windowsill to the chopping block to the polished linoleum.

And when she has finally managed to



push away the thought of Ailo, Juliet comes up against Christa. Eric has a woman. Of course he has. Christa. Juliet sees a younger, a more seductive Ailo. Wide hips, strong arms, long hair—all blond with no white—breasts bobbing frankly under a loose shirt. The same aggressive—and, in Christa, sexy—lack of chic. That same relishing way of chewing up and then spitting out her words.

Two other women come into her mind. Briseis and Chryseis. Those playmates of Achilles and Agamemnon. Each of them described as being "of the lovely cheeks." When her professor had read out the Greek word for it (which she could no longer remember), his forehead had gone quite pink and he'd seemed to be suppressing a giggle. For that moment, Juliet had despised him. So if Christa turns out to be a northern version of Briseis/Chryseis, will Juliet be able to start despising Eric as well?

How will she ever know, if she walks down to the highway and gets on the bus?

The fact is that she never intended to get on that bus. So it seems. With Ailo out of the way, it is easier for her to discover her own intentions. She gets up at last and makes more coffee, then pours it into a mug, not one of the cups that Ailo has put out.

She is too keyed up to be hungry, but she examines the bottles on the counter, which people must have brought for the wake. Cherry brandy, peach schnapps, Tia Maria, sweet vermouth. These bottles have been opened but the contents have not proved popular. The serious drinking has been done from the empty bottles that Ailo has ranged beside the door. Gin and whiskey, beer and wine.

Juliet pours Tia Maria into her coffee, and takes the bottle with her, up the steps into the big living room.

This is one of the longest days of the year. But the trees around here, the big bushy evergreens and the red-limbed arbutus, shut out the light from the descending sun. The windows in the living room are nothing but long slits in the wall, and the darkness has already begun to accumulate. The floor is not finished—old shabby rugs are laid down on squares of plywood—and the room is oddly and haphazardly furnished. A huge leather chair, of the sort that reclines and has a footrest. A couch covered by a ragged patchwork quilt, an ancient television set, and brick-and-plank bookshelves—on which there are no books, only stacks of old *National Geographics*, with a few sailing magazines and issues of *Popular Mechanics.*

Ailo obviously has not got around to cleaning up this room. There are smudges of ash where ashtrays have spilled onto the rugs. And crumbs everywhere.

Juliet just sits in the leather chair, adding more Tia Maria as the level of her coffee goes down.

Nothing is much to her liking on this coast. The trees are too large and crowded together and do not have any personality of their own—they simply combine to make a forest. The mountains are too grand and implausible, and the islands that float upon the waters of the Strait of Georgia are too persistently picturesque. This house, too, with its big spaces and slanted ceilings and unfinished wood, is stark and self-conscious.

The dog barks from time to time, but not urgently. Perhaps she just wants to come in and have company. But Juliet has never had a dog—a dog in the house would be a witness, not a companion, and would only make her feel uncomfortable.

Kallipareos. Of the lovely cheeks. Now she has it. The Homeric word is sparkling on her hook. And beyond that she is suddenly aware of all her Greek vocabulary, of everything that has been put in a closet for nearly six months now. Because she was not teaching Greek, she simply put it away.

That is what happens with that kind of thing. You put it away and now and again you look in the closet for something else, and you remember, and you think, Soon. Then after a while it becomes something that is just there, in the closet, and other things get crowded in front of it and on top of it and finally you don't think about it at all.

The thing that was your bright treasure. You don't think about it. A loss you could not have contemplated, at one time, and now it becomes something you can hardly remember.

That is what happens.

And even if it's not put away, even if you make your living from it, every day? Juliet thinks of the older teachers at the school, how little most of them care for whatever it is that they teach. Take Juanita, who chose Spanish purely because it goes with her Christian name (she is Irish). You could not say that Spanish is her treasure.

Few people, very few, have a treasure, and if you do you must hang on to it. You must not let yourself be waylaid and have it taken from you.

The Tia Maria has worked in a certain way with the coffee. It has made Juliet feel careless but powerful. It enables her to think that Eric is not so important, after all. He is someone she may dally with. Dally is the word. As Aphrodite did with Anchises. And then one morning she may slip away.

She gets up and finds the bathroom, then comes back and lies down on the couch with the quilt over her—too sleepy to notice Corky's hair on it, or Corky's smell.

When she wakes, it is full morning, though only twenty past six by the kitchen clock.

She has a headache. There is a bottle of aspirin in the bathroom—she takes two and washes herself and combs her hair and gets her toothbrush from her bag and brushes her teeth. Then she makes a fresh pot of coffee and eats a slice of homemade bread without bothering to heat or butter it. She sits at the kitchen table. Sunlight, slipping down through the trees, makes coppery splashes on the smooth trunks of the arbutus. Corky begins to bark, and barks for quite a long time, before the truck turns into the yard and silences her.

Juliet hears the door of the truck close, she hears him speaking to the dog, and dread comes over her. She wants to hide somewhere. It's like the moment at school before the winner of a prize is announced. Only worse, because she has no reasonable hope of winning. And because there will never be another chance so momentous in her life.

When the door opens, she cannot look up. On her knees the fingers of her hands are interwoven, clenched together.

"You're here," he says. He is laughing in triumph and admiration, as if at a most spectacular piece of impudence and daring. When he opens his arms, it's as if a wind had blown into the room and made her look up.

Six months ago, she did not know that this man existed. Six months ago, the man who died under the train was still alive, picking out his clothes for the trip.

"You're here."

She can tell by his voice that he is claiming her. She stands up, quite numb, and sees that he is older, heavier, more impetuous than she remembered. He advances on her and she feels herself ransacked from top to bottom, flooded with relief, assaulted by happiness. How astonishing this is. How close to dismay.

It turns out that Eric is not as surprised as he pretends. Ailo phoned him last night, to warn him about the strange girl, Juliet, and even offered to check for him whether the girl got on the bus. He thought it somehow right to take the chance that she would do so—to test fate, maybe—but when Ailo phoned to say that the girl had not left he was startled by the joy he felt. Still, he did not come home right away, and he did not tell Christa, though he knew he would have to tell her very soon.

All this Juliet absorbs bit by bit in the weeks and months that follow. Some information arrives accidentally, and some as the result of her imprudent probing.

Her own revelation (of non-virginity) is considered minor.

Christa is nothing like Ailo. She does not have wide hips or blond hair. She is a dark-haired, thin woman, witty and sometimes morose, who will become Juliet's great friend and mainstay during the years ahead—though she will never quite forgo a habit of sly teasing, the ironic flicker of submerged rivalry. ♦

SOON

Two profiles face each other. One, a pure-white heifer, with a particularly mild and tender expression, the other a green-faced man who is neither young nor old. He seems to be a minor official, maybe a postman—he wears that sort of cap. His lips are pale; the white of his visible eye is shining. A hand that is probably his offers up, from the lower margin of the painting, a little tree or an exuberant branch, fruited with jewels.

At the upper margin of the painting are dark clouds, and underneath them some small lottery houses and a toy church with its toy cross, perched on the curved surface of the earth. Within this curve a small man (drawn to a larger scale, however, than the buildings) walks along purposefully with a scythe on his shoulder, and a woman seems to wait for him. But she is hanging upside down.

There are other things as well. For instance, a girl milking a cow, within the heifer's cheek.

Juliet decided at once to buy this print, as a Christmas present for her parents. "Because it reminds me of them," she told Christa, who had come down with her, from Whale Bay, to do some shopping. They were in the gift shop of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Christa laughed. "The green man and the cow? They'll be flattered."

Christa never took anything seriously at first; she always had to make a joke about it. Juliet wasn't bothered. Three months pregnant, she was suddenly free of nausea, and, for that reason or some other, she was subject to fits of euphoria. She thought of food all the time, and hadn't even wanted to come into the gift shop, because she had spotted a lunchroom.

"I mean, it makes me think of their life," Juliet said. "I don't know why, but it does."

She loved everything in the painting, but particularly the little figures and rickety buildings at the top of it. The man with the scythe and the woman hanging upside down.

She looked for the title. "I and the Village."

It made exquisite sense.

"Chagall. I like Chagall," Christa said. "Picasso was a bastard. Didn't he say, 'Chagall is for shopgirls'? So what's wrong with shopgirls? Chagall should have said, 'Picasso is for people with funny faces.' "

Juliet had already told Christa some things about her parents—how they lived in a curious but not unhappy isolation, though her father, Sam, was a popular schoolteacher. They were cut off partly by her mother Sara's heart trouble but also by the fact that they subscribed to magazines that nobody around them read, listened to programs on the national radio network that nobody around them listened to. By Sara's making her own clothes—sometimes ineptly—from Vogue patterns, instead of Butterick. Even by the way they preserved some impression of youth instead of thickening and slouching, like the parents of Juliet's schoolfellows.

When her daughter, Penelope, was thirteen months old, Juliet flew with her to Toronto, then caught the train. This was in 1969. She got off in a town that was twenty miles away from the town where she had grown up, and where her parents still lived. Apparently the train did not stop there anymore.

She was disappointed to get off at this unfamiliar station and not to see reappear, at once, the trees and sidewalks and houses she remembered—among them her own house, spacious but plain, no doubt with the same blistering and shabby white paint, behind its bountiful soft maple tree.

Sam and Sara, here in this town where she had never seen them before, were smiling but anxious, diminished.

Sara gave a curious little cry, as if something had pecked her. "We're long and short, but still we match," she said.

At first Juliet did not understand what she meant. Then she figured it out—Sara was wearing a black linen skirt, down to her calves, and a matching jacket. The jacket's collar and cuffs were of a shiny lime-green cloth with black polka dots. A turban of the same green material covered her hair. She

"DECOY"/SANDY CARSON GALLERY

must have made the outfit herself, or got some dressmaker to make it for her. Its colors were unkind to her skin, which looked as if fine chalk dust had settled over it.

Juliet was wearing a black minidress.

"I was wondering what you'd think of me, black in the summertime, like I'm all in mourning," Sara said. "And here you're dressed to match. You look so smart—I'm all in favor of these short dresses."

"And long hair," Sam said. "An absolute hippie." He bent to look into the baby's face. "Hello, Penelope."

Sara said, "What a dolly."

She reached out for Penelope, but the arms that slid out of her sleeves were sticks too frail to hold any such burden. And they did not have to, because Penelope, who had tensed at the first sound of her grandmother's voice, now yelped and turned away, and hid her face in Juliet's neck.

Sara laughed. "Am I such a scarecrow?" Again, her voice was ill-controlled, rising to shrill peaks, then falling away. A couple of people on the platform turned to look. This was new—though maybe not entirely. Juliet remembered that people had always looked her mother's way when she talked or laughed, but in the old days it had been a spurt of merriment they'd noticed, something girlish and attractive (though not everybody had liked that, either—they had said that she was always trying to get attention).

Juliet said, "She's so tired."

Sam introduced the young woman who was standing behind them, keeping her distance as if she were taking care not to be identified as part of their group. And in fact it had not occurred to Juliet that she was.

"Juliet, this is Irene. Irene Avery."

Juliet stuck out her hand as well as she could while holding Penelope and the diaper bag, and when it became evident that Irene was not going to shake hands—or perhaps had not noticed the intention—she smiled. Irene did not smile back. She stood quite still but gave the impression of wanting to bolt.

"Hello," Juliet said.

Irene said, "Pleased to meet you," in a sufficiently audible voice, but without expression.

"Irene is our good fairy," Sara said, and then Irene's face did change. She scowled a little, with sensible embarrassment.

She was not as tall as Juliet, but she was broader in the shoulders and hips, with strong arms and a stubborn chin. She had thick, springy black hair, pulled back from her face into a stubby ponytail, rather hostile black eyebrows, and the sort of skin that tans easily. Her eyes were green or blue, a light, surprising color against this skin, and hard to look into, being deep-set. Also because she held her head slightly lowered and twisted to the side. This wariness seemed hardened and deliberate.

"She does one heck of a lot of work for a fairy," Sam said with his large strategic grin.

And now, of course, Juliet recalled the mention in letters of a woman who had been hired to help, when Sara began to go so drastically downhill. But she had thought of somebody much older. Irene was surely no older than Juliet herself.

The car was the same Pontiac that Sam had bought secondhand maybe ten years earlier. The original blue paint showed in streaks here and there but was mostly faded to gray, and the effects of winter road salt could be seen in its petticoat fringe of rust.

"The Old Gray Mare," Sara said, almost out of breath after the short walk from the railway platform.

"She hasn't given up," Juliet said. She spoke admiringly, as seemed to be expected. She had forgotten that this was what they called the car, though it was a name that she herself had thought up.

"Oh, she never gives up," Sara said, once she was settled, with Irene's help, in the back seat. "And we'd never give up on her."

Juliet got into the front seat, juggling Penelope, who was beginning to whimper. The heat inside the car was shocking, even though it had been parked with the windows down in the scanty shade of the station poplars.

"Actually, I'm considering," Sam said as he backed out, "I'm considering turning her in for a truck."

"He doesn't mean it," Sara shrieked.

"For the business," Sam continued. "It'd be a lot handier. And you'd get a certain amount of advertising every time you drove down the street, just from the name on the door."

"He's teasing," Sara said. "How am I going to ride around in a vehicle that says 'Fresh Vegetables'? Am I supposed to be the squash or the cabbage?"

"Better pipe down, Missus," Sam said. "Or you won't have any breath left when we reach home."

After nearly thirty years of teaching in the public schools around the county, Sam had suddenly quit and decided to get into the business of selling vegetables full time. He had always cultivated a big vegetable garden, and raspberry canes, in the empty lot beside their house, and they had sold their surplus to a few people around town. But now, apparently, this was to become his way of making a living, selling to grocery stores and perhaps eventually putting up a market stall at the front gate.

"You're serious about all this?" Juliet said quietly.

"Darn right I am."

"You're not going to miss teaching?"

"Not on your Nelly-o. I was fed up. I was fed up to the eyeballs."

It was true that after all those years he had never been offered, in any school, the job of principal. She supposed that that was what he was fed up with. He was a remarkable teacher, one whose antics and energy everyone remembered, his grade six unlike any other year in his pupils' lives. Yet he had been passed over, time and again, and probably for that very reason. His methods could be seen as undercutting authority. So it was easy enough to imagine authority deciding that he was not the sort of man to be in charge, that he'd do less harm where he was.

He liked outdoor work; he was good at talking to people; he would probably do well selling vegetables.

But Sara would hate it.

Juliet did not much care for the idea, either. If there was a side to be on, however, she would have to choose his. She was not going to define herself as a snob.

And the truth was that she saw herself—she saw herself and Sam and Sara, but particularly herself and Sam—as superior in their own way to everybody around them. So why should his peddling vegetables matter?

Sam spoke now in a softer, conspiratorial voice. "What's her name?"

He meant the baby's.

"Penelope. We're not going to call her Penny. Just Penelope."

"No, I mean—I mean her last name."

"Oh. Well, it's Henderson-Porteous, I guess. Or Porteous-Henderson. But maybe that's too much of a mouthful, when she's already called Penelope? We knew that, but we wanted Penelope. We'll have to settle it somehow."

"So. He's given her his name," Sam said. "Well, that's something. I mean, that's good."

Juliet was surprised for a moment, then not. "Of course he has," she said, pretending to be mystified and amused. "She's his."

"Oh, yes. Yes. But given the circumstances."

"If you mean the fact that we're not married," she said, "it's hardly anything to take into account. Where we live, nobody thinks about that."

"Suppose not," Sam said. "Was he married to the first one?"

Juliet had told them about Eric's wife, whom he had cared for during the eight years that she had lived after her car accident.

"Ann? Yes. Well, I don't really know. But yes. I think so. Yes."

Sara called into the front seat, "Wouldn't it be nice to stop for ice cream?"

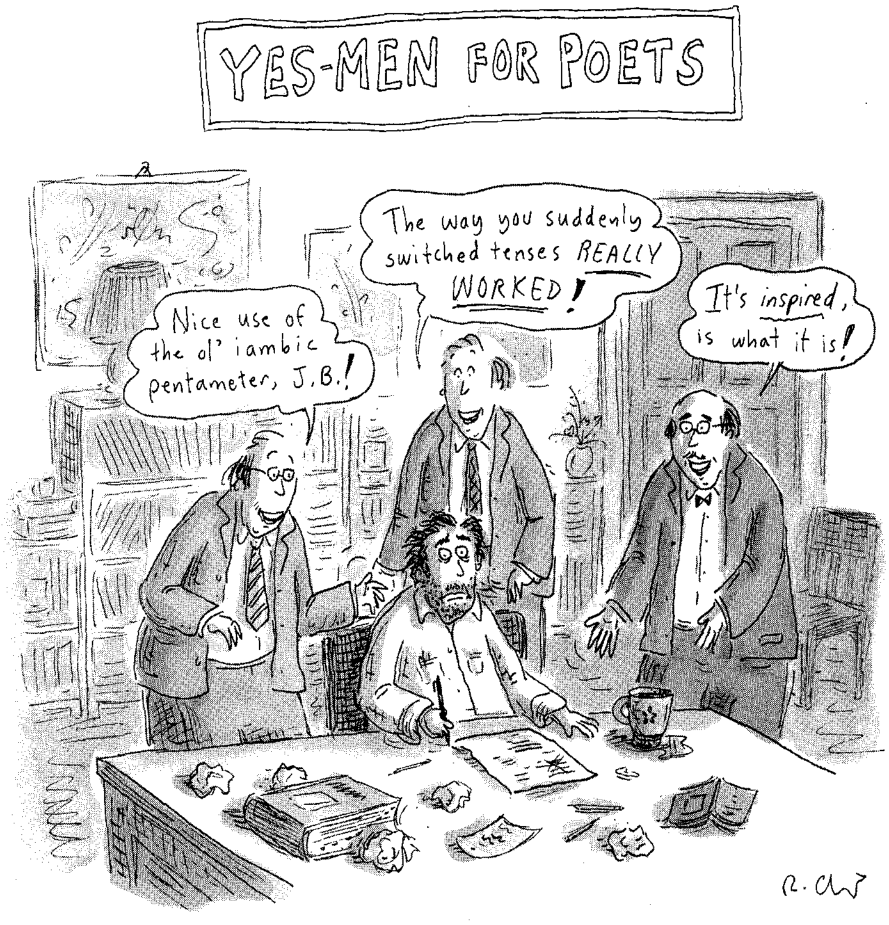
"We've got ice cream in the fridge at home," Sam called back. And added quietly, shockingly to Juliet, "Take her in anyplace for a treat, and she just wants to put on a show."

The windows were still down; a warm wind blew through the car. It was full summer—a season that never arrived, as far as Juliet could tell, on the West Coast. The hardwood trees were humped over the far edge of the fields, making blue-black caves of shade, and the crops and the meadows in front of them, under the hard sunlight, were gold and green. Vigorous young wheat and barley and corn and beans—fairly blistering your eyes.

Sara said, "What's this conference in aid of? In the front seat? We can't hear back here for the wind."

Sam said, "Nothing interesting. Just asking Juliet how her fellow's doing with the fishing."

Eric still made his living prawn-fishing. Once, he had been a medical student, Juliet had learned. But that had come to an end because he had performed an abortion, on a friend (not a girlfriend). All had gone well, but somehow the story got out. This was something that Juliet had thought of revealing to her broad-minded parents. She had wanted, perhaps, to establish Eric as an educated man, not just a fisherman. But why should that matter, especially now that Sam was a vegetable man? Also, their broad-mindedness was possibly not as reliable as she had thought.


YES-MEN FOR POETS
The way you suddenly switched tenses REALLY WORKED!
Nice use of the ol' iambic pentameter, J.B.!
It's inspired, is what it is!

There was more to be sold than fresh vegetables and berries. Jam, bottled juice, and relish were turned out in the kitchen. The first morning of Juliet's visit, raspberry-jam-making was in progress, Irene in charge, her blouse wet with steam or sweat, sticking to her skin between the shoulder blades. Every so often she flashed a look at the television set, which had been wheeled down the back hall to the kitchen doorway, so that you had to squeeze around it to get into the room. On the screen was a Bullwinkle cartoon. Now and then Irene gave a loud laugh at the cartoon, and Juliet laughed a little, too, to be comradely. Of this Irene took no notice.

Counter space had to be cleared so that Juliet could boil and mash an egg for Penelope's breakfast, and make some coffee and toast for herself. "Is that enough room?" Irene asked her, in a voice that was dubious, as if Juliet were an intruder whose demands could not be foreseen.

Close up, Juliet saw that many fine black hairs grew on Irene's forearms. Some grew on her cheeks, too, just in front of her ears.

In her sidelong way, Irene watched everything that Juliet did, watched her fiddle with the knobs on the stove (not remembering at first which burners they controlled), watched her lifting the egg out of the saucepan and peeling off the shell (which stuck and came away in little bits rather than in large easy pieces), then watched her choosing a saucer to mash it in.

"You don't want her to drop that on the floor." This was a reference to the china saucer. "Don't you got a plastic dish for her?"

"I'll watch it," Juliet said.

It turned out that Irene, who was three years younger than Juliet, was a mother, too. She had a three-year-old son and a daughter who was just under two. Their names were Trevor and Tracy. Their father had been killed the previous summer, in an accident at the chicken barn where he worked. "Right in time for my twenty-first birthday," Irene said, as if misfortunes were something to accumulate, like charms on a bracelet.

After Penelope had eaten all of the egg that she would accept, Juliet hoisted her onto her hip and carried her upstairs. Halfway up she realized that she had not washed the saucer.

There was nowhere to leave the baby, who was not yet walking but could crawl very quickly. Certainly she could not be left for even five minutes in the kitchen, with the boiling water in the sterilizer and the hot jam and the chopping knives—it was too much to ask Irene to watch her. And first thing this morning she had again refused to make friends with Sara. So Juliet carried her up the enclosed stairs to the attic—having shut the door behind them—and set her there on the steps to play while she looked for the old playpen. Fortunately, Penelope was an expert on steps.

The house was a full two stories tall, its rooms high-ceilinged but boxlike—or so they seemed to Juliet now. The roof was steeply pitched, so that you could walk around in the middle of the attic. Juliet had done that when she was a child—walked around telling herself stories she had read, with certain additions or alterations, and dancing for an imaginary audience. The real audience consisted of broken or simply banished furniture, old trunks, an immensely heavy buffalo coat, a purple-martin house (a present from long-ago students of Sam's, which had failed to attract any purple martins), a German helmet that was supposed to have been brought home from the First World War by Sam's father, and an unintentionally comic amateur's painting of the Empress of Ireland sinking in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with matchstick figures flying off in all directions.

And there, leaning against the wall, was "I and the Village." Face out—no attempt had been made to hide it. And no dust on it to speak of, so it had not been there for long.

She found the playpen after a few minutes of searching. It was a handsome, heavy piece of furniture, with a wooden floor and spindle sides. And the baby carriage. Her parents had kept everything, had hoped for another child. There had been one miscarriage at least. Laughter in their bed, on Sunday mornings, had made Juliet feel as if the house had been invaded by a stealthy, even shameful disturbance, not favorable to herself.

PRE-RAPHAELITE PINUPS

No one is saying how it came to be this way.
Sex is and is not part of the picture.

•

Too many people
wearing too many clothes,
thinking too few things.

•

The wallpaper is the real center of attention,
the figures mostly background music.

There is a rhythm to their eating.
One contemplates his wine,
another drinks it.

•

I never noticed it before,
but that angel's feet are on fire!

•

It's a penitent's head
they've pasted on a voluptuous body.

•

Why, she's practically an insect herself.

•

Look how many worlds are woven
with the silly-string of the Fates.

•

The wheat field was like a drive-in movie
for the shepherd and his date.

•

The berry-boy offers his handful of red
to the gray little girl.

The baby carriage was of the kind that folded down to become a stroller. This was something Juliet had forgotten about, or hadn't known. Sweating by now, and covered with dust, she got to work to effect this transformation. This sort of job was never easy for her; she never grasped right away the manner in which things were put together, and she might have dragged the whole thing downstairs and gone out to the garden to get Sam to help her, but for the thought of Irene. Irene's flickering pale eyes, indirect but measuring looks, clever hands. Her vigilance, in which

It's all in the fold,
the fertility dance of being draped over . . .

•

One could panel a library
with the grain of her hair.

•

Can't you see I'm just a poor,
blind, accordion-playing lesbian?

Do not disturb the visionary butterfly
at work in me.

•

The heretic wears a pretty demonic
apron and crown,

while Medusa's blue hairnet
tangles even the trees.

•

A squirrel, a robin;
an army of innocence
waits to molest a young girl—
asleep and unaware.

•

But isn't every story an allegory—
every house strewn with alchemical symbols like these?

•

Ach—but that rainbow is loud!
Too much beauty makes a person faint.

—*Elaine Equi*

there was something that couldn't quite be called contempt. Juliet didn't know what it could be called. An attitude, indifferent but uncompromising, like a cat's.

She managed at last to get the stroller into shape. It was cumbersome, half again as big as the stroller she was used to. And filthy, of course. As she herself was by now, and Penelope, on the steps, even more so. And right beside the baby's hand was something Juliet hadn't even noticed. A nail. The sort of thing you paid no attention to, until you had a baby at the hand-to-mouth stage, and that you had then to be on the lookout for all the time.

And she hadn't been. Everything here distracted her. The heat, Irene, the things that were familiar, and the things that were unfamiliar.

I and the Village.

"Oh," Sara said. "I hoped you wouldn't notice. Don't take it to heart."

The sunroom was now Sara's bedroom. Bamboo shades had been hung on all the windows, filling the small room—once part of the veranda—with a brownish-yellow light and a uniform heat. Sara, however, was wearing pink flannel pajamas. Yesterday, at the station, with her pencilled eyebrows and raspberry lipstick, her turban and suit, she had looked to Juliet like an elderly Frenchwoman (not that Juliet had seen many elderly Frenchwomen), but now, with her white hair flying out in wisps, her bright eyes anxious under nearly nonexistent brows, she looked more like an oddly aged child. She was sitting up against the pillows with the quilts pulled up to her waist. When Juliet had walked her to the bathroom earlier, she had seen that despite the heat Sara was wearing both socks and slippers in bed.

A straight-backed chair had been placed by her bed, its seat being easier for her to reach than a table. On it were pills and medicines, talcum powder, moisturizing lotion, a half-drunk cup of milky tea, a glass filmed with the traces of some dark tonic, probably iron. On top of the bed were magazines—old copies of *Vogue* and *Ladies' Home Journal.*

"I'm not," Juliet said.

"We did have it hanging up. It was in the back hall by the dining-room door. Then Daddy took it down."

"Why?"

"He didn't say anything about it to me. He didn't say that he was going to. Then came a day when it was just gone."

"Why would he take it down?"

"Oh. It would be some notion he had, you know."

"What sort of a notion?"

"Oh. I think—you know, I think it probably had to do with Irene. That it would disturb Irene."

"There wasn't anybody naked in it. Not like the Botticelli."

For indeed there was a print of "The Birth of Venus" hanging in Sam and Sara's living room. It had been the subject of nervous jokes years ago on the occasions when they had had other teachers to supper.

"No. But it was *modern.* I think it made Daddy uncomfortable. Or maybe looking at it with Irene looking at it—that made him uncomfortable. He might have been afraid that it would make her feel—oh, sort of contemptuous of us. You know—she might think we were weird. He wouldn't like for Irene to think we were that kind of people."

Juliet said, "The kind of people who

would hang that kind of picture? You mean he'd care so much what she thought of our *pictures*?"

"Oh, well. You know Daddy."

"He's never been afraid to disagree with people. Wasn't that the trouble in his job?"

"What?" Sara said. "Oh. Yes. He can disagree. But he's careful sometimes. And Irene. Irene is—he's careful of her. She's very valuable, Irene."

"Did he think she'd quit her job because we had a weird picture?"

"I would have left it up, dear. I value anything that comes from you. But Daddy..."

Juliet said nothing. From the time when she was nine or ten until she was perhaps fourteen, she and Sara had had an understanding about Sam. *You know Daddy.*

That was their time of being women together. Home permanents were tried on Juliet's stubborn fine hair; dressmaking sessions produced outfits like nobody else's; suppers were peanut-butter and tomato-and-mayonnaise sandwiches on the evenings when Sam stayed late for school meetings. Stories were told and retold about Sara's old boyfriends and girlfriends, the jokes they'd played and the fun they'd had in the days when Sara was a schoolteacher, too, before her heart got bad. Glimpses of Sam's besotted courtship, disasters with a borrowed car, the time he showed up at Sara's door disguised as a tramp. Sara and Juliet, making fudge and threading ribbons through the eyelet trim on their petticoats, the two of them intertwined.

And then, abruptly, Juliet had wanted no more of it. She had wanted instead to talk to Sam late at night in the kitchen, to ask him about black holes, the Ice Age, God. She'd hated the way Sara undermined their talk with wide-eyed, ingenuous questions, the way she always tried somehow to bring the conversation back to herself. That was why the talks had had to happen late at night and with the understanding that neither she nor Sam ever spoke about. *Wait until we're rid of Sara.* Just for the time being, of course.

There was a reminder that went along with that. *Be nice to Sara. She risked her life to have you—that's worth remembering.*

"Daddy doesn't mind disagreeing with people who are over him," Sara said, taking a deep breath. "But you know how he is with people who are *under* him. He'll do anything to make sure that they don't feel he's different from them. He just has to put himself down on their level."

Juliet did know, of course. She knew the way Sam talked to the boy at the gas pumps, the way he joked in the hardware store. Still, she said nothing.

"What you hate is walking. This is hiking—hiking is different from walking."

"He sucks up to them," Sara concluded, with a sudden change of tone, a wavering edge of viciousness, a weak chuckle.

Juliet cleaned up the stroller and Penelope and herself, and set off on a walk into town. She had the excuse that she needed a certain brand of mild disinfectant soap with which to wash diapers—if she used ordinary soap, the baby would get a rash. But she had her own reasons, irresistible though embarrassing.

This was the way she had walked to school, for years of her life. Even when she was going to college, and came home on a visit, she had still been the same—a girl going to school. Would she never be done going to school? Somebody had asked Sam that at the time when she had just won the Intercollegiate Latin Translation Prize, and he had said, " 'Fraid not." He told this story on himself. God forbid that he should mention prizes. Leave Sara to do that—though Sara might have forgotten just what the prize was for.

And now here she was, redeemed. Like any other young woman, pushing her baby. Concerned about diaper soap. And this wasn't just her baby. Her love child. She sometimes spoke of Penelope that way, just to Eric. He took it as a joke, she said it as a joke, because of course they lived together and had done so for four years, and they intended to go on together. The fact that they were not married meant nothing to him, as far as she knew, and she often forgot about it herself. But occasionally—and now, especially, here at home—it was the fact of her unmarried state that gave her some glory of accomplishment, a silly surge of bliss.

"So—you went upstreet today," Sam said. (Had he always said "upstreet"? Sara and Juliet said "uptown.") "See anybody you knew?"

"I had to go to the drugstore," Juliet said. "So I was talking to Charlie Little."

This conversation took place in the kitchen, after eleven o'clock at night. Juliet had decided that this was the best time to make up Penelope's bottles for the next day.

"Little Charlie?" said Sam, who had always had this other habit she hadn't remembered, the habit of continuing to call people by their school nicknames. "Did he admire the offspring?"

"Of course."

"And well he might."

Sam was sitting at the table, drinking rye and smoking a cigarette. His drinking whiskey was new. Because Sara's father had been a drunk—not a down-and-out drunk but enough of a terror around the house to make his daughter horrified by drinking—Sam had never so much as drunk a beer, at least to Juliet's knowledge, at home.

Juliet hadn't expected to see Charlie at the drugstore, though it belonged to his family. The last she had heard of him, he was going to be an engineer. She had mentioned that to him today, maybe tactlessly, but he had been easy and jovial when he told her that it hadn't worked out. He had put on weight around the middle, and his hair had thinned, had lost some of its wave and shine. He had greeted Juliet with enthusiasm, with compliments for herself as well as her baby, and this had confused her so that she had felt her face and neck hot, slightly perspiring, all the time he talked to her. In high school, he had had no time for her—except for a decent greeting, since his manners had always been affable, democratic. He had taken out the most desirable girls in the school, and was now, as he told her, married to one of them. Janey Peel. They had two children, one of them about Penelope's age, one older. That was the reason, he said, with a candor that seemed to owe something to Juliet's own situation—that was the reason he hadn't gone on to become an engineer.

So he knew how to win a smile and a gurgle from Penelope, and he'd chatted with Juliet as a fellow-parent, somebody now on the same level. She'd felt idiotically flattered and pleased. But there had been more to his attention than that—the quick glance at her unadorned left hand, the joke about his own marriage. And something else. He had appraised her covertly—perhaps he saw her now as a woman displaying the fruits of a boldly sexual life. Juliet, of all people. The gawk, the scholar.

"Does she look like you?" he had asked, when he squatted down to peer at Penelope.

"More like her father," Juliet had replied casually, but with a flood of pride, the sweat now pearling on her upper lip.

"Does she?" Charlie had said, and straightened up, speaking confidentially. "I'll tell you one thing, though. I thought it was a shame—"

Juliet said to Sam, "He told me he thought it was a shame what had happened with you."

"He did, did he? What did you say to that?"

"I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what he meant. But I didn't want him to know that."

"No."

She sat down at the table. "I'd like a drink, but I don't like whiskey."

"So you drink now, too?"

"Wine. We make our own wine. Everybody in the Bay does."

He told her a joke then, the sort of joke that he would never have told her before. It involved a couple going to a motel and it ended up with the line "So it's like what I always tell the girls at Sunday school—you don't have to drink and smoke to have a good time."

She laughed but felt her face go hot, as it had with Charlie.

"Why did you leave your job?" she said. "Were you let go because of me?"

"Come on now." Sam laughed. "Don't think you're so important. I wasn't let go. I wasn't fired."

"All right, then. You quit."

"I quit."

"Did it have anything at all to do with me?"

"I quit because I got goddam sick of my neck always being in that noose. I was on the point of quitting for years."

"It had nothing to do with me?"

"All right," Sam said. "I got into an argument. There were things said."

"What things?"

"You don't need to know. And don't worry," he said after a moment. "They didn't fire me. They couldn't have fired me. There are rules. It's like I told you—I was ready to go anyway."

"But you don't realize," Juliet said. "You don't *realize*. You don't realize just how *stupid* this is and what a disgusting place this is to live in, where people say that kind of thing. If I told people about this where I live, they wouldn't believe it. It would seem like a joke."

"Well. Unfortunately, your mother and I don't live where you live. Here is where we live. Does that fellow of yours think it's a joke, too? I don't want to talk about this anymore. I'm going to look in on Mother and then I'm going to bed."

"The passenger train," Juliet said, with continued energy, even scorn. "It does still stop here, doesn't it? You didn't want me getting off here, *did you*?"

On his way out of the room, her father did not answer.

Light from the last of the town's street lights now fell across Juliet's bed. The big soft maple tree had been cut down, replaced by a patch of Sam's rhubarb. Last night Juliet had left the curtains closed to shade the bed, but tonight she felt that she needed the outside air. So she had to move the pillow down to the foot of the bed, along with Penelope, who had slept like an angel with the light in her face.

She wished that she had drunk a little of the whiskey. She lay stiff with frustration and anger, composing in her head a letter to Eric. *I don't know what I'm doing here. I should never have come here. I can't wait to come home.*

Home.

When it was barely light in the morning, she woke to the noise of a vacuum cleaner. Then a voice—Sam's—interrupted this noise, and she fell asleep again. When she woke up later, she thought it must have been a dream. Otherwise Penelope would have woken, and she hadn't.

The kitchen was cooler this morning, no longer full of the smell of simmering fruit. Irene was fixing little caps of gingham cloth and labels onto all the jars.

"I thought I heard you vacuuming," Juliet said, dredging up cheerfulness. "I must have dreamed it. It was only about five o'clock in the morning."

Irene did not answer for a moment. She was writing on a label. She wrote with great concentration, her lips caught between her teeth.

"That was her," she said when she had finished. "She woke your dad up and he had to go and make her quit."

This seemed unlikely. The day before, Sara had left her bed only to go to the bathroom.

"He told me," Irene said. "She wakes up in the middle of the night and thinks she's going to do something, and then

HOLIDAYS

YOU ARE IN PARADISE

If you are brown and decide to date a British man, sooner or later he will present you with a Paul Gauguin. This may come in postcard form or as a valentine, as a framed print for your birthday or repeated many times across wrapping paper, but it will come, and it will always be a painting from Gauguin's Tahitian period, 1891-1903. Chances are nudity will be involved, also some large spherical fruit. This has happened to me three times with three different men, but on only one occasion did the color of my skin appear to push us out into the South Seas themselves. I say *my* skin, but, as with any passion, this was a generalized one. M liked anything that lurked around the equator: Herman Melville, the early explorers, pirates, breadfruit (or the idea of breadfruit), and native girls of all varieties. We booked a holiday to Tonga. In normal circumstances, I would never be receptive to such an idea. I holiday in only one way: in my own house, on my balcony. (Or, at a stretch, in a hotel in Europe.) On this occasion, though, I was halfway through writing a novel. If a man with a canary had beckoned me to follow him down a mine, I would have gone.

For the twenty-six hours of our flight, M sat next to me, very merry in his specially purchased straw hat, and I was merry, too, working away at the free wine, but I think that, while M knew all the time we were going to Tonga, I still somehow expected to land in lovely, temperate Antwerp. I remember stepping onto Nuku'alofa's roiling tar runway in the face-melting heat and thinking, I have come to a country with no white tube-thingy, where you must walk along the roiling tar runway in the face-melting heat. How did this happen? Next thing I knew, we were on a boat so small that only the boatman, M and I, and one other couple could fit in it. It seemed appropriate to ask them if they came here often.

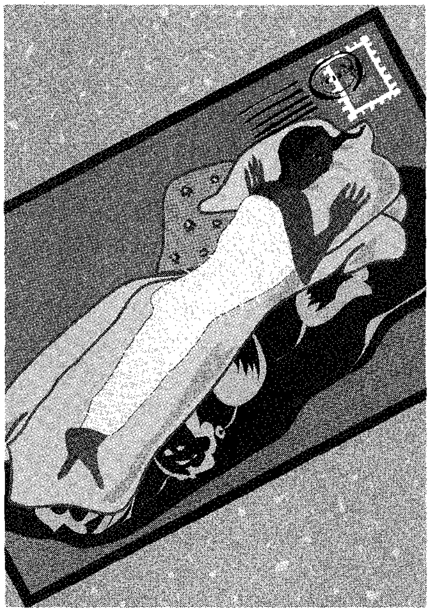
MAXIMILIAN BODE

"Us? Often?" the man cried.

They were English, and a throbbing, comic-book red all over.

"Well, it's paradise, isn't it?" the woman said reverently, as we all looked out toward the island we were heading for in our small boat.

"It's beyond your imagination," the man said. "We never would have dreamt it. It's the holiday of a lifetime. But we won the lottery, didn't we?"



I thought he meant this figuratively, as in "life's lottery," as in "lucky us, going on our upscale holiday with similarly lucky people like you." But no. They'd won the actual lottery.

"This is the first thing we bought!" the woman said. "But how can it get better than this?"

Much has been written about the horror of upscale holidays, of the strange metaphysical loneliness instilled by constantly being informed by fellow-tourists that you are in paradise, of how the pleasures offered to the tourist mix poisonously with said tourist's personal guilt/shame regarding his or her relative wealth when compared with the indigenous people serving him or her tall cool glass after tall cool glass of Fuzzy Navel. Take all that as read. Also take as read the German-owned island, the existential misery of our Tongan waiters, the enforced "native entertainments" on a Sunday evening, and the Americans next door who had brought their own TV. What makes the whole thing stand out in my memory is my neurological reaction. I am an allergic person by nature: cats, dogs, horses, mosquitoes, and all facial products. But I have never before found myself allergic to a whole country. Allergic to its insects, its sand, its coral, its food, and—the clincher—its water. We had booked for two weeks, but five days into the holiday of a lifetime my windpipe began to close. I felt bad for M. He had his dream, and I was ruining it. He had his *fale* (traditional bungalow made of coconut fibre) and his hammock and his circle of beach. In the middle of this ring there was a brown girl, but Gauguin wouldn't have painted her. Her right arm was twice its normal size, her left eye would not open, her legs were bleeding. And she wouldn't stop whining. She refused to be excited by the fact that many Tongans can hold their breath underwater for an abnormally long time. That the men dress as women until they come of age. That the millennium would arrive here before it arrived anywhere else.

By the sixth day, M had given up on me. He made friends with a uniquely cheery Tongan waiter named Tony, who, interestingly, still wore women's clothing. They would sit together on our deck looking out at the ocean, sometimes playing Scrabble, while I sat indoors wrapped in a cocoon fashioned from mosquito netting. If you squinted, eliding Tony's fearsome biceps, you could imagine that M had met his Gauguin princess at last.

—*Zadie Smith*

he has to get up and make her quit."

"She must have a spurt of energy then," Juliet said.

Why did she feel as if she should apologize?

"Yeah." Irene was getting to work on another label. When that was done, she faced Juliet. "Wants to wake your dad up and get attention, that's it. Him dead tired and he's got to get out of bed and tend to her."

Juliet turned away. Not wanting to set Penelope down, she juggled her on her hip while she fished the egg out with a spoon, tapped and shelled and mashed it with one hand.

While she fed Penelope she was afraid to speak, lest the tone of her voice alarm the baby and set her wailing. Something communicated itself to Irene, however. She said in a more subdued voice, but with an undertone of defiance, "That's just the way they get. When they're old like that, they can't help it. They can't think of nobody but themselves."

Sara's eyes were closed, but she opened them immediately. "Oh, my dear ones," she said, as if laughing at herself. "My Juliet. My Penelope."

Penelope seemed to be getting used to her. At least she did not cry this morning, or turn her face away.

"Here," Sara said, reaching for one of her magazines. "Set her down and let her work at this."

Penelope looked dubious for a moment, then grabbed a page and tore it vigorously.

"There you go," Sara said. "All babies love to tear up magazines. I remember."

On the bedside chair there was a bowl of Cream of Wheat, barely touched.

"You didn't eat your breakfast?" Juliet said. "Is that not what you wanted?"

Sara looked at the bowl as if serious consideration were called for but couldn't be managed.

"I don't remember. No, I guess I didn't want it. Who knows—crossed my mind that Irene could be poisoning me." She had a little fit of giggling and gasping. "I'm just kidding," she said, when she'd recovered. "But she is very fierce. Irene. We mustn't underestimate Irene. Did you see the hairs on her arms?"

"Like cats' hairs," Juliet said.

"Like skunks'."

"We must hope that none of them get into the jam."

"Don't make me laugh . . . anymore."

Penelope became so absorbed in tearing up magazines that in a while Juliet was able to leave her in Sara's room and carry the Cream of Wheat out to the kitchen. Without saying anything, she began to make an eggnog. Irene was in and out, carrying trays of jam jars to the car. On the back step, Sam was hosing off the earth that clung to some newly dug potatoes. He had begun to sing—too softly at first for his words to be heard. Then, as Irene came up the steps, more loudly. " 'Irene, good ni-i-ight. Irene, good night. Good night, Irene, good night, Irene, I'll see you in my dreams.' "

Irene, in the kitchen, swung around and yelled, "Don't sing that song about me!"

"What song about you?" Sam said, with feigned amazement. "Who's singing a song about you?"

"You were. You just were."

"Oh—that song. That song about Irene? The girl in the song? By golly—I forgot that was your name, too."

He started up again, but humming, stealthily. Irene stood listening, flushed, with her chest going up and down, waiting to pounce if she should hear a word.

"Don't you sing about me. If it's got my name in it, it's about me."

Suddenly Sam burst out in full force.

" 'Last Saturday night I got married, me and my wife settled down—' "

"Stop it! You stop it!" Irene cried, wide-eyed, inflamed. "If you don't stop, I'll go out there and squirt the hose on you."

Sam was delivering jam that afternoon to various grocery stores and a few gift shops that had placed orders. He invited Juliet to come along. He had gone to the hardware store and bought a brand-new baby's car seat, for Penelope.

"That's one thing we don't have in the attic," he said. "When you were little, I don't know if they existed. Anyway, it wouldn't have mattered. We didn't have a car."

"It's very spiffy," Juliet said. "I hope it didn't cost a fortune."

"A mere bagatelle," Sam said, bowing her into the car.

Irene was in the field picking more raspberries. These would be for pies. Sam tooted the horn twice and waved as they set off, and Irene decided to respond, raising one arm as if batting away a fly.

"She's a dandy girl," Sam said. "I don't know how we would have survived without her. But I imagine she seems pretty rough to you."

"I hardly know her."

"No. She's scared stiff of you."

"Surely not." And trying to think of something appreciative, or at least neutral, to say about Irene, Juliet asked how her husband had been killed, at the chicken barn.

"I don't know if he was a criminal type or just immature. Anyway, he got in with some goons who were planning a sideline in stolen chickens and of course they managed to set off the alarm and the farmer came out with a gun and, whether he meant to shoot him or not, he did—"

"My God."

"So Irene and her in-laws went to court, but the fellow got off. Well, he would. It must have been pretty hard on her, though. Even if it doesn't seem that the husband was much of a prize."

Juliet said that of course it must have been, and asked him if Irene was somebody he had taught at school.

"No, no, no. She hardly got to school, as far as I can make out."

He said that her family had lived up north, somewhere near Huntsville. One day they'd all gone into town. Father, mother, kids. And the father had told them that he had things to do and he'd meet them in a while. He told them where. When. And they walked around with no money to spend, until it was time, but he just never showed up.

"Never intended to show up. Ditched them. So they had to go on welfare. Lived in some shack out in the country, where it was cheap. Irene's older sister, the one who was the mainstay, more than the mother, I gather—she died of a burst appendix. No way of getting her into town, snowstorm raging and they didn't have a phone. Irene didn't want to go back to school then, because her sister had sort of protected her from the way the other kids would act toward them. She may seem thick-skinned these days, but I guess she wasn't always. Maybe even now it's more of a masquerade."

And now, he said, Irene's mother was

looking after the little boy and the little girl. "They're cute kids, too. The little girl has some problem with a cleft palate and she's already had one operation but she'll need another one. She'll be all right. But it's just one more thing."

One more thing.

What was the matter with Juliet? She felt no real sympathy. She felt herself rebelling, deep down, against this wretched litany. It was too much. When the cleft palate had appeared in the story, what she'd really wanted to do was complain. *Too much.*

She knew she was wrong, but the feeling would not budge. She was afraid to say anything more, lest out of her mouth she betray her hard heart. She was afraid she would say to Sam, "Just what is so wonderful about all this misery? Does it make her a saint?" Or she might say, most unforgivably, "I hope you don't mean to get us mixed up with people like that."

"I'm telling you," Sam said, "at the time she came to help us out I was at my wits' end. There, last fall, your mother was a downright catastrophe. It wasn't exactly that she was letting everything go. No. Better if she had let everything go. Better if she'd done nothing. What she did, she'd start one job up and then she couldn't finish it. Over and over. Not that this was anything absolutely new. I mean, I always had to pick up after her and help her do the housework. Me and you both—remember? She'd always been this sweet pretty girl with a bad heart, and she was used to being waited on. Once in a while over the years it did occur to me that she could have tried harder.

"But it got so bad," he said. "It got so I'd come home to the washing machine in the middle of the kitchen floor and wet clothes slopping all over the place. And some baking mess she'd started and given up on, stuff charred to a crisp in the oven. I was scared she'd set herself on fire. Set the house on fire. I'd tell her and tell her, 'Stay in bed.' But she wouldn't, and then she'd be all in this mess, crying. I tried a couple of girls coming in, and they just couldn't handle her. So then—Irene.

"Irene," he said with a robust sigh. "I bless the day. I tell you. Bless the day."

But, like all good things, he said, this must come to an end. Irene was getting married. To a widower in his forties or fifties. A farmer. He was supposed to have money, and for her sake Sam hoped it was true. Because the man did not have much else to recommend him.

"By Jesus, he doesn't. As far as I can see, he's only got one tooth in his head. Bad sign, in my opinion. Too proud or stingy to get choppers. Think of it—a grand-looking girl like her."

The front windows were down and Juliet could smell the hay, which was freshly cut and baled—nobody made hay coils anymore. Some elm trees were still standing, marvels now, in their isolation.

They stopped in a village built all along one street in a narrow valley. Bedrock stuck out of the valley walls—the only place for many miles around where such massive rocks could be seen. Juliet remembered coming here one time as a child, when there was a special park that you paid to enter. In the park there was a fountain and a teahouse where they served strawberry shortcake and ice cream—and surely other things that she could not remember. Caves in the rock were named after the Seven Dwarfs. Sam and Sara had sat on the ground by the fountain eating ice cream while Juliet had rushed ahead to explore the caves (which were nothing much, really—quite shallow). She had wanted them to come with her, but Sam had said, "You know your mother can't climb."

"You run," Sara had said. "Come back and tell us all about it." She was dressed up. Her black taffeta skirt spread in a circle around her on the grass. Those were called ballerina skirts.

It must have been a special day.

Juliet asked Sam about this when he came out of the store. At first he could not remember. Then he did. A gyp joint, he said. He didn't know when it had disappeared.

Juliet could see no trace anywhere along the street of a fountain or a teahouse.

What could the carefree occasion have been? A birthday? A wedding anniversary?

"A bringer of peace and order," Sam said, and it took a moment for her to realize that he was still talking about Irene. "She'll turn her hand to anything. Cut the grass and hoe the garden. Whatever she's doing, she gives it her best and she behaves as if it's a privilege to do it. That's what never ceases to amaze me."

He spoke insistently, even solemnly, over the noise of the car's struggle up the hill.

"She restored my faith in women. Helpmates."

Sam spent a long time in each store. People wanted to talk; they had been saving up jokes to tell him. A few followed him out to see his daughter and her baby.

"So that's the girl who talks Latin," one woman said.

"Getting a bit rusty nowadays," Sam said. "Nowadays she has her hands full."

"I bet," the woman said, craning to get a look at Penelope. "But aren't they a blessing? Oh, the wee ones."

Juliet had thought she might talk to Sam about the thesis she was planning to return to—though at present that was still just a dream. Such subjects had come up naturally between them before. Not with Sara. Sara would say, "Now, you must tell me what you're doing in your studies," and Juliet would sum things up, and Sara might ask her how she kept all those Greek names straight. But Sam had known what she was talking about. At college, she had told her friends how her father had explained to her what "thaumaturgy" meant, when she ran across the word at the age of twelve or thirteen. They asked if her father was a scholar.

"Sure," she said. "He teaches grade six."

Now she had a feeling that if she talked about her thesis he would subtly try to undermine her. Or maybe not so subtly. He might use the word "airy-fairy." Or claim to have forgotten things that she could not believe he had forgotten.

But maybe he had. Rooms in his mind had closed up, the windows blackened—what was in there judged by him to be too useless, too discreditable, to meet the light of day. Juliet spoke out more harshly than she intended. "Does she *want* to get married? Irene?" This question startled Sam, coming as it did in that tone and after a considerable silence.

"I don't know," he said. And after a moment, "I don't see how she could."

"Ask her," Juliet said. "You must want to, the way you feel about her."

They drove for a mile or two before he spoke. It was clear that she had given offense. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

"Happy, Grumpy, Dopey, Sleepy, Sneezy," Sara said.

"Doc," Juliet said.

"Doc. *Doc.* Happy, Sneezy, *Doc,* Grumpy, *Bashful,* Sneezy—no. Sneezy, Bashful, Doc, Grumpy . . . *Sleepy,* Happy, Doc, Bashful."

Having counted on her fingers, Sara said, "Wasn't that eight?

"We went there more than once," she added. "We used to call it the Shrine of Strawberry Shortcake. Oh, how I'd like to go again."

"Well, there's nothing there," Juliet said. "I couldn't see where it was."

"I'm sure I could have. Why didn't I go with you? A summer drive. What strength does it take to ride in a car? Daddy's always saying I haven't the strength."

"You came to meet me."

"Yes, I did," Sara said. "But he didn't want me to. I had to throw a fit."

She reached around to pull up the pillows behind her head, but she couldn't manage it, so Juliet did it for her.

"Drat," Sara said. "What a useless piece of goods I am. I think I could handle a bath, though. What if company comes?"

Juliet asked if she was expecting anybody.

"No. But what if?"

So Juliet took her into the bathroom, and Penelope crawled after them. Then, when the water was ready and her grandmother had been hoisted in, Penelope decided that the bath must be for her as well. Juliet undressed her, and the baby and the old woman were bathed together. Though Sara, naked, did not look like an old woman as much as an old girl—a girl, say, who had suffered some exotic, wasting, desiccating disease. Penelope accepted her presence without the least alarm, but kept a firm hold on her own duck-shaped yellow soap.

It was in the bath that Sara finally brought herself to ask, circumspectly, about Eric.

"I'm sure he is a nice man," she said.

"Sometimes," Juliet said casually.

"He was so good to his first wife."

OUR STAFF PICKS

• •

"Only wife," Juliet corrected her. "So far."

"But I'm sure now you have this baby—you're happy, I mean. I'm sure you're happy."

"As happy as is consistent with living in sin," Juliet said, surprising her mother by wringing out a dripping washcloth over her soaped head.

"That's what I mean," Sara said, after ducking and covering her face, with a joyful shriek. Then, "Juliet?"

"Yes?"

"You know I don't mean it if I ever say mean things about Daddy. I know he loves me. He's just unhappy."

Juliet dreamed that she was a child again, and in this house, though the arrangement of the rooms was somewhat different. She looked out the window of one of the unfamiliar rooms and saw an arc of water sparkling in the air. This water came from the hose. Her father, with his back to her, was watering the garden. A figure moved in and out among the raspberry canes and was revealed, after a while, to be Irene—though a more childish Irene, supple and merry. She was dodging the water sprinkled from the hose. Hiding, reappearing, mostly successful but always caught again for an instant before she ran away. The game was supposed to be lighthearted, but Juliet, behind the window, watched it with disgust. Her father kept his back to her, yet she believed—she somehow *saw*—that he held the hose low, in front of his body, and that it was only the nozzle of it that he turned back and forth.

The dream was suffused with a sticky horror. Not the kind of horror that jostles its dim shapes outside your skin but the kind that curls through the narrowest passages of your blood.

When she woke, that feeling was still with her. She found the dream shameful, obvious, banal. It seemed a dirty indulgence of her own.

There was a knock on the front door in the middle of the afternoon. Nobody used the front door—Juliet found it a bit stiff to open.

The man who stood there wore a well-pressed short-sleeved yellow shirt and tan pants. He was perhaps a few years older than she was, tall and rather frail-looking, slightly hollow-chested, but vigorous in his greeting, relentless in his smiling.

"I've come to see the lady of the house," he said.

Juliet left him standing there and went into the sunroom.

"There's a man at the door," she said. "He might be selling something. Should I get rid of him?"

Sara was pushing herself up. "No, no," she said breathlessly. "Tidy me a bit, can you? I heard his voice. It's Don. It's my friend Don."

Don had already entered the house and could be heard outside the sunroom door.

"No fuss, Sara. It's only me. Are you decent?"

Sara, with a wild and happy look, reached for the hairbrush she could not manage, then gave up and ran her fingers through her hair. Her voice rang out gaily. "I'm as decent as I'll ever be, I'm afraid. Come in here."

The man appeared, and she lifted her arms to him. "You smell of summer," she said. "What is it?" She fingered his shirt. "Ironing. Ironed cotton. My, that's nice."

"I did it myself," he said. "Sally's over at the church messing about with the flowers. Not a bad job, eh?"

"Lovely," Sara said. "But you almost didn't get in. Juliet thought you were a salesman. Juliet's my daughter. My dear daughter. I told you, didn't I? I told you she was coming. Don is my minister, Juliet. My friend and minister."

Don straightened up, grasped Juliet's hand.

"Good you're here—I'm very glad to meet you. And you weren't so far wrong, actually. I am a sort of salesman."

Juliet smiled politely.

"What church are you the minister of?"

The question made Sara laugh. "Oh, dear—that gives the show away, doesn't it?"

"I'm from Trinity," Don said, with his unfazed smile. "And as for giving the show away—it's no news to me that Sara and Sam haven't been involved with any of the churches in our community. I just started dropping in anyway, because your mother is such a charming lady."

Juliet could not remember whether Trinity was the Anglican or the United church.

"Would you get Don a reasonable sort of chair, dear?" Sara said. "Here he is bending over me like a stork. And some sort of refreshment, Don? Would you like an eggnog? Juliet makes me the most delicious eggnogs. No, no, that's probably too heavy. You've just come in from the heat of the day. Tea? That's hot, too. Ginger ale? Some kind of juice? What juice do we have, Juliet?"

Don said, "I don't need anything but a glass of water. That would be welcome."

"No tea? Really?" Sara was quite out of breath. "But I think I'd like some. You could drink half a cup, surely. Juliet?"

In the kitchen, by herself—Irene was in the garden, hoeing around the beans—Juliet wondered if the tea had been a ruse to get her out of the room, for a few private words. A few private words, perhaps even a few words of prayer. The notion sickened her.

Sam and Sara had never belonged to any church, though Sam had told someone, early in their life here, that they were Druids. Word had gone around that they belonged to a church not represented in town, and that information had moved them up a notch from having no religion at all. Sam, at school, had never rebelled at having to read the Bible and say the Lord's Prayer every morning, any more than he had objected to "God Save the Queen."

"There's times for sticking your neck out and times not to," he'd said. "You satisfy them this way, and maybe you can get away with telling the kids a few facts about evolution."

Sara had at one time been interested in the Baha'i faith, but Juliet believed that this interest had waned.

She made enough tea for the three of them and found some digestive biscuits in the cupboard—also the brass tray that Sara had usually taken out only for fancy occasions.

Don accepted a cup, and gulped down the ice water that she had remembered to bring him, but shook his head at the cookies.

"Not for me, thanks." He seemed to say this with special emphasis, as if godliness forbade him.

He asked Juliet where she lived, what was the nature of the weather on the West Coast, what work her husband did.

"He's a prawn fisherman, but he's actually not my husband," Juliet said pleasantly.

Don nodded. Ah, yes.

"Rough seas out there?"

"Sometimes."

"Whale Bay. I've never heard of it, but now I'll remember it. What church do you go to in Whale Bay?"

"He is a service dog—he's my accountant."

"We don't go. We don't go to church."

"Is there not a church of your sort handy?"

Smiling, Juliet shook her head. "There *is* no church of our sort. We don't believe in God."

Don's cup made a little clatter as he set it down in its saucer. He said that he was sorry to hear that. "Truly sorry to hear that. How long have you been of this opinion?"

"I don't know. Ever since I gave it any serious thought."

"And your mother's told me you have a child. You have a little girl, don't you?"

Juliet said yes, she had.

"And she has never been christened? You intend to bring her up a heathen?"

Juliet said that she expected Penelope would make up her own mind about that someday. "But we intend to bring her up without religion. Yes."

"That is sad," Don said quietly. "For yourselves, it's sad. You and your—whatever you call him—you've decided to reject God's grace. Well. You are adults. But to reject it for your child—it's like denying her nourishment."

Juliet felt her composure cracking. "But we don't *believe*," she said. "We don't believe in God's grace. It's not like denying her nourishment—it's refusing to bring her up on lies."

"Lies. What millions of people all over the world believe in you call lies. Don't you think that's a little presumptuous of you?"

"Those millions of people don't necessarily believe in it—they just go to church," Juliet said, her voice heating. "They just don't think. If there is a God, then God gave me a mind and didn't He intend me to use it?

"Also," she said, trying to hold herself steady. "Also, millions of people believe something different. They believe in Buddha, for instance. So how does millions of people believing in something make it true?"

"Christ is alive," Don said readily. "Buddha isn't."

"That's just something to say. What does it mean? I don't see any proof of either one being alive, as far as that goes."

"*You* don't. But others do. Do you know that Henry Ford—Henry Ford, II, who has everything that anybody could desire in life—nevertheless gets down on his knees and prays to God every night of his life?"

"Henry Ford?" Juliet cried. "Henry Ford? What does anything *Henry Ford* does matter to me?"

The argument was taking the course that arguments of this sort are bound to take. The minister's voice, which had started out more sorrowful than angry—though always indicating ironclad conviction—now had a shrill and scolding tone, while Juliet, who had begun, she thought, in reasonable resistance, calm, shrewd, rather maddeningly polite, was in a cold and biting rage. Both of them cast around for arguments and refutations that would be more insulting than useful.

Meanwhile, Sara nibbled on a digestive biscuit, not looking up at them. Now and then she shivered, as if their words had struck her, but they were beyond noticing.

What did bring their display to an end was the loud wailing of Penelope, who had woken wet and had complained softly for a while, then more vigorously, and had finally given way to fury. Sara heard her first and tried to attract their attention.

"Penelope," she said faintly, then, with more effort, "Juliet. Penelope." Juliet and the minister both looked at her distractedly, and then the minister said, with a sudden drop in his voice, "Your baby."

Juliet hurried from the room. She was shaking when she picked Penelope up, and she came close to stabbing her as she was pinning on a dry diaper. Penelope stopped crying, not because she was comforted but because she was alarmed by this rough attention. Her wide wet eyes, her astonished stare broke into Juliet's preoccupation, and she tried to settle herself down, talking as gently as she could and then picking her child up, walking with her up and down the hall. After a few minutes the tension began to leave Penelope's body.

Juliet felt the same thing happening to her, and when she thought that a certain amount of control and quiet had returned to both of them she carried Penelope downstairs.

The minister had come out of Sara's room and was waiting for her. In a voice that might have been contrite but sounded, in fact, frightened, he said, "That's a nice baby."

Juliet said, "Thank you."

She thought that now they might properly say goodbye, but something was holding him. He continued to look at her. He put his hand out as if to catch hold of her shoulder, then dropped it.

"Do you know if you have—" he said, then shook his head slightly. The "have" had come out sounding like "hab."

"Jooze," he said, and slapped his hand against his throat. He waved in the direction of the kitchen.

Juliet's first thought was that he must be drunk. His head was wagging back and forth, his eyes seemed to be filmed over. Had he come here drunk? Had he brought something in his pocket? Then she remembered. A girl, a pupil at Torrance House. This girl, a diabetic, would suffer a kind of seizure, become thick-tongued, distraught, staggering, if she went too long without food.

Shifting Penelope to her hip, she took hold of his arm and steadied him along toward the kitchen. Juice. That was what they had given the girl, that was what he was talking about.

"Just a minute, just a minute, you'll be all right," she said. He held himself upright, hands pressed down on the counter, head lowered.

There was no orange juice—she remembered giving Penelope the last of it that morning. But there was a bottle of grape soda, which Sam and Irene liked to drink when they came in from working in the garden.

"Here," she said. Managing with one hand, as she was used to doing, she poured out a glassful. "Here." And, as he drank, she said, "I'm sorry there's no juice. But it's the sugar, isn't it? You have to get some sugar."

He drank it down. He said, "Yeah. Sugar. Thanks." Already his voice was clearing. She remembered this, too, about the girl at the school—how quick and apparently miraculous the recovery. But before he was quite recovered, or quite himself, while he was still holding his head at a slant, he met her eyes. Not on purpose, it seemed, just by chance. The look in his eyes was not grateful, or forgiving—it was not really personal. It was just the raw look of an astounded animal, hanging on to whatever it could find.

And within a few seconds the eyes,

"KNOT"/SANDY CARSON GALLERY

the face, became the face of the man, the minister, who set down his glass and without another word fled the house.

Sara was either asleep or pretending to be when Juliet went to pick up the tea tray. Her sleeping state, her dozing state, and her waking state now had such delicate and shifting boundaries that it was hard to distinguish among them. At any rate, she spoke—she said in little more than a whisper, "Juliet?"

Juliet paused in the doorway.

"You must think Don is . . . rather a simpleton," Sara said. "But he isn't well. He's a diabetic. It's serious."

Juliet said, "Yes."

"He needs his faith."

"Foxhole argument," Juliet said, but quietly, and perhaps Sara did not hear, for she went on talking.

"My faith isn't so simple," Sara said, her voice shaky (and seeming to Juliet, at this moment, strategically pathetic). "I can't describe it. But it's . . . all I can say is . . . it's *something*. It's a . . . wonderful . . . *something*. When it gets really bad for me—when it gets so bad I . . . You know what I think then?"

Juliet shook her head.

"I think, All right. I think, *Soon—soon I'll see Juliet.*"

Dreaded (Dearest) Eric,

Where to begin? I am fine and Penelope is fine. Considering. She walks confidently now around Sara's bed but is still leery of striking out with no support. The summer heat is amazing, compared with the West Coast. Even when it rains. It's a good thing it does rain, because Sam is going full tilt at the market-garden business. The other day I rode around with him in the ancient vehicle delivering the newly dug first potatoes of the season and fresh raspberries and raspberry jam (made by a sort of Junior Ilse Koch type who inhabits our kitchen). He is quite gung-ho. Sara stays in bed and dozes or looks at outdated fashion magazines. A minister came to visit her and he and I got into a big stupid row about the existence of God or some such hot topic. The visit is going O.K., though. . . .

This was a letter that Juliet found years later. Eric must have saved it by accident—it had no particular importance in their lives.

She had gone back to the house of her childhood once more, a few months after that visit, for Sara's funeral. Irene was no longer around, and Juliet had no memory of asking or being told where she was. Most probably she had married. As Sam did again, a couple of years later. He married a fellow-teacher, a good-natured, handsome, competent woman. They lived in her house—Sam tore down the house where he and Sara had lived, and extended the garden for his crops. When his wife retired, they bought a trailer and began to go on long winter trips. They visited Juliet twice at Whale Bay. Eric took them out in his boat. He and Sam got along well. As Sam said, like a house afire.

When she read the letter, Juliet winced, as anybody does on discovering the preserved and disconcerting voice of some past fabricated self. She wondered at the sprightly coverup, contrasting, as it did, with the pain of her memories. Then she

thought that some shift must have taken place, during that visit, which she did not remember. Some shift concerning where home was. It had stopped being at Whale Bay with Eric and had slipped back to where it had been before, all her life before.

Because it's what happens at home that you try to protect, as best you can, for as long as you can.

And yet she had not protected Sara. When Sara had said, "Soon I'll see Juliet," Juliet had found no reply. Could she not have managed something? Why should it have been so difficult? Just to say, "Yes." To Sara it would have meant so much—to herself, surely, so little. But she had turned away. She had carried the tray to the kitchen, and there she had washed and dried the cups and also the glass that had held grape soda. She had put everything away. ♦

SILENCE

On the short ferry ride from Buckley Bay to Denman Island, Juliet gets out of her car and stands at the front of the boat, in the late-spring breeze. A woman standing there recognizes her, and they begin to talk. It is not unusual for people to take a second look at Juliet and wonder where they've seen her before. She appears regularly on the provincial television channel, interviewing people who lead notable lives, and deftly directing panel discussions, for a program called "Issues of the Day." Her hair is cut short now, as short as possible, and has taken on a very dark auburn color, which matches the frames of her glasses. She often wears black pants, as she does today, and an ivory silk shirt, and sometimes a black jacket. She is what her mother would have called a striking woman.

"Forgive me. People must always be bothering you," the woman says. She is about Juliet's age. Long black hair streaked with gray, no makeup, denim skirt. She lives on Denman, so Juliet asks her what she knows about the Spiritual Balance Centre.

"Because my daughter is there," Juliet says. "She's been on a retreat there, or a course—I don't know what they call it. For six months."

"There are a couple of places like that," the woman says. "They sort of come and go. I don't mean there's anything suspect about them. Just that they're generally off in the woods, you know, and don't have much to do with the community. Well, what would be the point of a retreat if they did?"

She says that Juliet must be looking forward to seeing her daughter again and Juliet says, yes, very much.

"I'm spoiled," she says. "She's twenty years old, my daughter—she'll be twenty-one this month, actually—and we haven't been apart much."

The woman says that she has a son who is twenty and fifteen- and eighteen-year-old daughters, and there are days when she'd *pay* them all to go on a retreat.

Juliet laughs. "Well. I've only got the one. Of course, I can't guarantee that I won't be all for shipping her back, given a few weeks."

She finds this kind of fond but exasperated mother talk easy to slip into (Juliet is an expert at reassuring responses), but the truth is that Penelope has scarcely ever given her cause for complaint, and if she wanted to be totally honest at this point she would say that one day without some contact with her daughter is hard to bear, let alone six months. Penelope spent a summer working as a hotel chambermaid at Banff, and she has gone on bus trips to Mexico. A hitchhiking trip to Newfoundland. But, in order to save money, she has always lived with Juliet, and there has never before been a six-month break.

She gives me delight, Juliet could have said. *Not that she is one of those song-and-dance purveyors of sunshine and cheer and looking-on-the-bright-side. But she has grace and compassion and she is as wise as if she'd been on this earth for eighty years. Her nature is reflective—not all over the map, like mine. Somewhat reticent, like her father's. She is also angelically pretty—blond like my mother but not so frail. Strong and noble. Molded, I should say, like a caryatid. And, contrary to popular notions, I am not even faintly jealous. All this time without her—and no word from her, because Spiritual Balance does not allow letters or phone calls—all this time I've been in a sort of desert, and when her message came I was like an old patch of cracked earth getting a full drink of rain.*

"Hope to see you Sunday afternoon. It's time," Penelope's card had said.

Time to come home, was what Juliet hoped this meant. But of course she would leave that up to Penelope.

Penelope had drawn a rudimentary map, and Juliet shortly found herself parked in front of an old church—that is, a church building that was seventy-five or eighty years old, covered with stucco, not as old or nearly as impressive as churches often were in the part of Canada where Juliet had grown up. Behind it was a more recent building, with a slanting roof and windows all across its front, as well as a simple outdoor stage and some benches and what looked like a volleyball court, with a sagging net. Everything was shabby, and the once cleared patch of land was being reclaimed by juniper and poplars.

A couple of people—she couldn't tell whether they were men or women—were doing some carpentry work on the stage, and others sat on the benches in separate small groups. All wore ordinary clothes, not yellow robes or anything of that sort. For a few minutes, no notice was taken of Juliet's car. Then one of the people on the benches rose and walked unhurriedly toward her. A short middle-aged man wearing glasses.

Juliet greeted him and asked for Penelope. He did not speak—perhaps there was a rule of silence—but nodded and turned away and went into the church. From which there shortly appeared not Penelope but a heavy, slow-moving woman with white hair, wearing jeans and a baggy sweater.

"What an honor to meet you," she said. "Do come inside. I've asked Donny to make us some tea."

She had a broad fresh face, a smile that was both roguish and tender, and what Juliet supposed one would call twinkling eyes. "My name is Joan," she said. Juliet had been expecting an assumed name like Serenity, or something with an Eastern flavor, nothing so plain and familiar as Joan.

"I've got the right place, have I? I'm a stranger on Denman," she said in a way that she hoped was disarming. "You know I've come to see Penelope?"

"Of course. Penelope." Joan prolonged the name, with a certain tone of celebration.

The inside of the church was darkened, with purple cloth hung over the high windows. The pews and other church furnishings had been removed, and plain white curtains had been strung up to form private cubicles, as in a hospital ward. The cubicle into which Juliet was directed had, however, no bed, just a small table and a couple of plastic chairs and some open shelves piled untidily with loose papers.

"I'm afraid we're still in the process of getting things fixed up in here," Joan said. "Juliet. May I call you Juliet?"

"Yes, of course."

"I'm not used to talking to a celebrity." Joan held her hands together in a prayer pose beneath her chin. "I don't know whether to be informal or not."

"I'm not much of a celebrity."

"Oh, you are. Now, don't say that. And I'll just get it off my chest right away, how I admire you for the work you do. It's a beam in the darkness. The only television worth watching."

"Thank you," Juliet said. "I had a note from Penelope."

"I know. But I'm sorry to have to tell you, Juliet, I'm very sorry and I don't want you to be too disappointed—Penelope is not here."

The woman says those words—*Penelope is not here*—as lightly as possible, as if Penelope's absence could be turned into a matter for amused contemplation, even for their mutual delight.

Juliet has to take a deep breath. For a moment she cannot speak. Dread pours through her. Foreknowledge. Then she pulls herself back to reasonable consideration of this fact. She fishes around in her bag.

"She said she hoped—"

"I know. I know," Joan says. "She did intend to be here, but the fact was she could not—"

"Where is she? Where did she go?"

"I cannot tell you that."

"You mean you can't or you won't?"

"I can't. I don't know. But I can tell you one thing that may put your mind at rest. Wherever she has gone, whatever she has decided, it is the right thing for her. It is the *right* thing for her spirituality and her growth."

Juliet decides to let this pass. She gags

HOLIDAYS

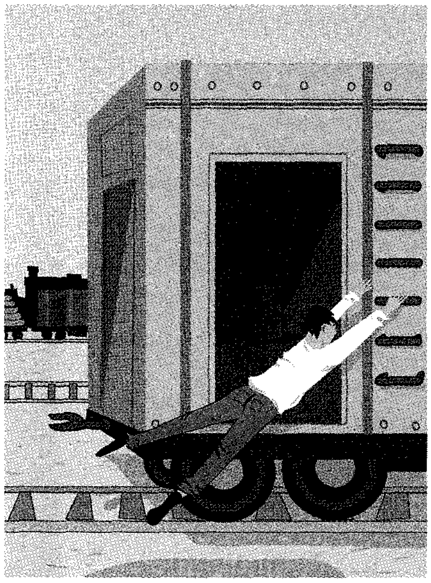
TRAIN IN VAIN

My father's agoraphobia made leaving the house a spooky and ritualistic process, ruled by mysterious tempers, but with enough drugs it sometimes happened, and we were off, the whole family, on vacation! The very drugs that loosened his nerves and made the big bad outside world navigable also made him a sloppy driver, weaving lackadaisically around the highway, and wherever we were going—California, Vancouver—would seem very far away. Invariably, our crappy car would catch fire on steep grades (my sister's job was to douse the transmission hump with water when she saw the carpet fibres smoldering), plus with the seven of us kids all piled on top of one another somebody was always carsick and ralphing in the back seat. We kept an old dented saucepan called the "spit-up" pan back there, so my dad wouldn't have to pull over every time a child needed to vomit. Subsequently, I haven't been much of a vacationer. As a young man, I tried Europe, but the woman I was meeting, on our second day in Paris, said she needed time alone, and then went off to Barcelona with somebody else. For three days I walked to the Hôtel de Ville for reasons too stupid to admit and read an omnibus edition of Dashiell Hammett. I'd never been lied to like that, and I took my pain to mean I lacked Continental sophistication, and Paris sort of died inside me.

But! I loved hopping freight trains. It was cheap, dirty, loud, picturesque, illegal, athletic, dangerous, and, best of all, it didn't seem like a vacation. In fact, as far as I could tell, there was nothing in riding trains that even remotely resembled pleasure. It was hard work. You walked for miles on a crippling ballast of gravel, looking for an open boxcar, and slept on a cushion of cardboard, your feet forward, in the direction of travel, so that you wouldn't break your neck in a derailment. You drank water from old Clorox bottles. You pissed out the door. The schedule was indifferent to your needs and the destinations were pointless. There might have been some romance to it—there might have been some road signs and red neon, some dead ends and diners, some hash browns—but really I was just skylarking. All the skills necessary for hopping trains were the sort you master by the time you get out of grade school—jungle-gym stuff, monkey bars and rings and ladders. If you could climb and run, if you liked jumping and bouncing and falling, then you could ride freight trains.

The minute you entered a yard, the bigness of the trains translated right into your bones. It sounds corny, but you got proxy thrills of power. Boxcars as wide as whales, locomotives roaming up and down the yard with the single white eye of a cyclops, grain hoppers overflowing with corn and wheat, gondolas piled with scrap metal and flatbeds loaded with raw logs or finished lumber, triple-deckers packed with import cars, empty deadheads and old rusting crummies shunted onto sidings. The dreamy size of the trains made your sense of trespass keen, and the noise of the yard was enough to knock you over. And yet for all the vagrant time I spent I never had any real hassles. The guys who work the trains are among that peculiar class of impassioned men in America, men who love their work and, loving it, want to share, as though they were holding a fable in trust and some part of America was stored inside their job. I'd wave collegially to the brakemen high up in the cupola of a caboose and talk easily to the men making up trains, who in turn would pull a manifest from their pockets and point out a decent ride, an empty box or gon on the next train out.

Boxcars were the best rides, offering a room with a view and some protection from the rain or sun or snow. I'd jam a stick or a discarded brake shoe in the door so it wouldn't rattle shut and make a sepulchre of the box while I slept. Most nights, though, I stayed up late, sleepless, because of all the bouncing. I liked the clangor of crossing guards, candy-striped and flashing with warning lights, an idled car or two waiting in the dim red glow. After a few days, I would be filthy, carrying a funeral around on my face. The dirt wasn't unpleasant—it marked my travels like a stamp in a passport. I would pack along a pair of gloves, which kept my hands somewhat clean as I climbed over couplings, but in the main I liked being dirty and feeling, on some level, strange and unwelcome. It sharpened my longing and called upon stores of faith I didn't know I possessed. The dirt was like an account, a measure of wealth, and so, as the days and miles went by, I felt as though I were becoming someone.



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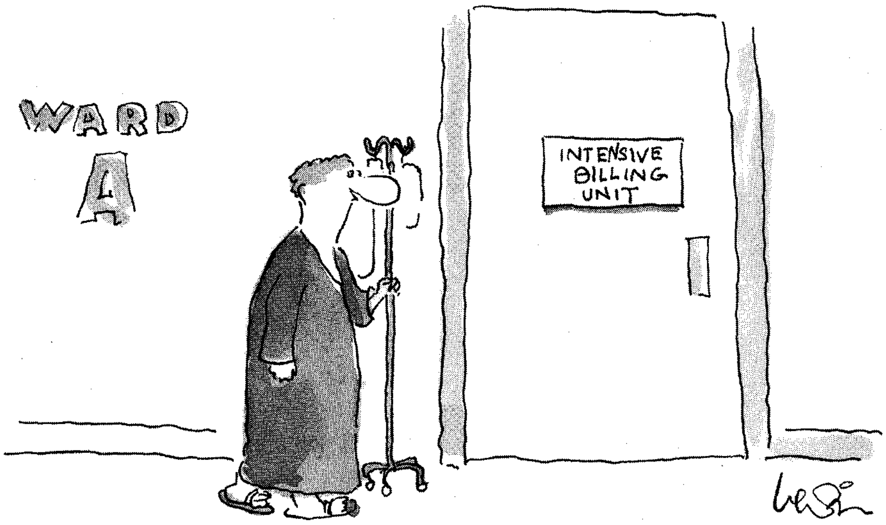

on the word "spirituality," which seems to encompass—as she often says—everything from prayer wheels to High Mass. She had never expected that Penelope, with her intelligence, would get mixed up in anything like this.

"I just thought I should know," she says. "In case she wanted me to send on any of her things."

"Her possessions?" Joan seems unable to suppress a smile, though she modifies it at once with an expression of tenderness. "Penelope is not very concerned right now about her *possessions*."

Sometimes Juliet realizes, in the middle of an interview, that the person across from her has reserves of hostility that were not apparent before the cameras started rolling. A person whom Juliet has underestimated, whom she has thought rather stupid, may turn out to have strength of this sort. Playful but deadly hostility. Her rule then is never to show that she is taken aback, never to display any hint of hostility in return.

"What I mean by growth is our inward growth, of course," Joan says.

"I understand," Juliet says, looking her in the eye.

"Penelope has had such a wonderful opportunity in her life to meet interesting people—goodness, she hasn't needed to meet interesting people, she's grown *up* with an interesting person, you're her *mother*—but, you know, sometimes there's a dimension that is missing. Grownup children feel that they've missed *out* on something—"

"Oh, yes," Juliet says. "I know that grownup children can have all sorts of complaints."

Joan has decided to come down hard.

"The spiritual dimension—I have to say this—was it not altogether lacking in Penelope's life? I take it she did not grow up in a faith-based home."

"Religion was not a banned subject. We could talk about it."

"But perhaps it was the *way* you talked about it. Your intellectual way. If you know what I mean. You are so clever," she adds kindly.

"So you say." Juliet is aware that any control she had over the interview, and over herself, is faltering, and may be lost.

"Not so *I* say, Juliet. So *Penelope* says. Penelope is a dear fine girl, but she came to us here in great hunger. Hunger for the things that were not available to her in her home. There you were, with your wonderful, busy, successful life. But, Juliet, do you not know that your daughter has known loneliness? That she has known unhappiness?"

"Don't most people feel that, at one time or another? Loneliness and unhappiness?"

"It's not for me to say. Oh, Juliet. You are a woman of marvellous insights. I've often watched you on television and I've thought, How does she get right to the heart of things like that, and all the time stay so nice and polite to people? I never thought I'd be sitting talking to you face to face. And, what's more, that I'd be in a position to *help* you—"

"I think that maybe you're mistaken about that."

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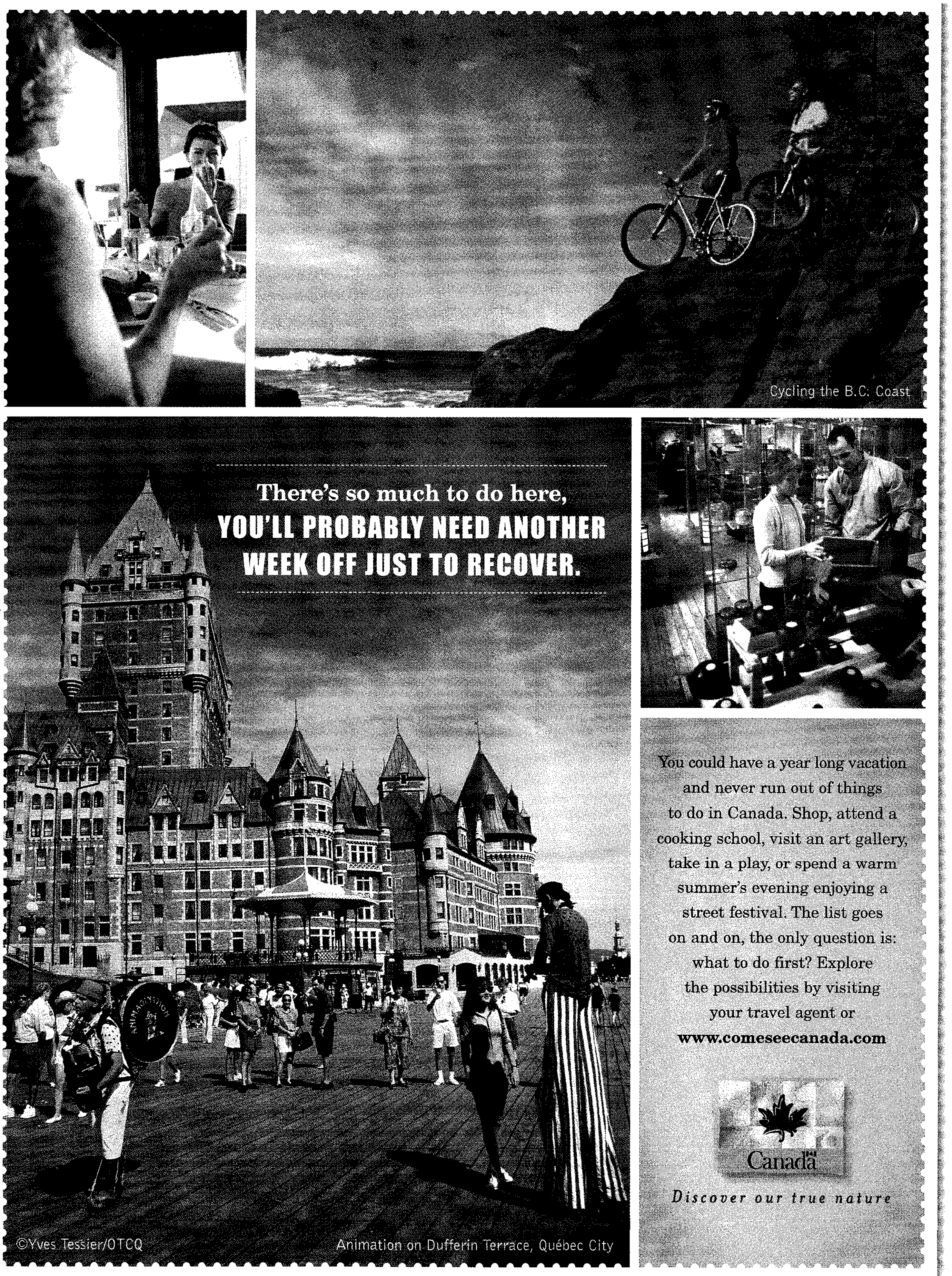
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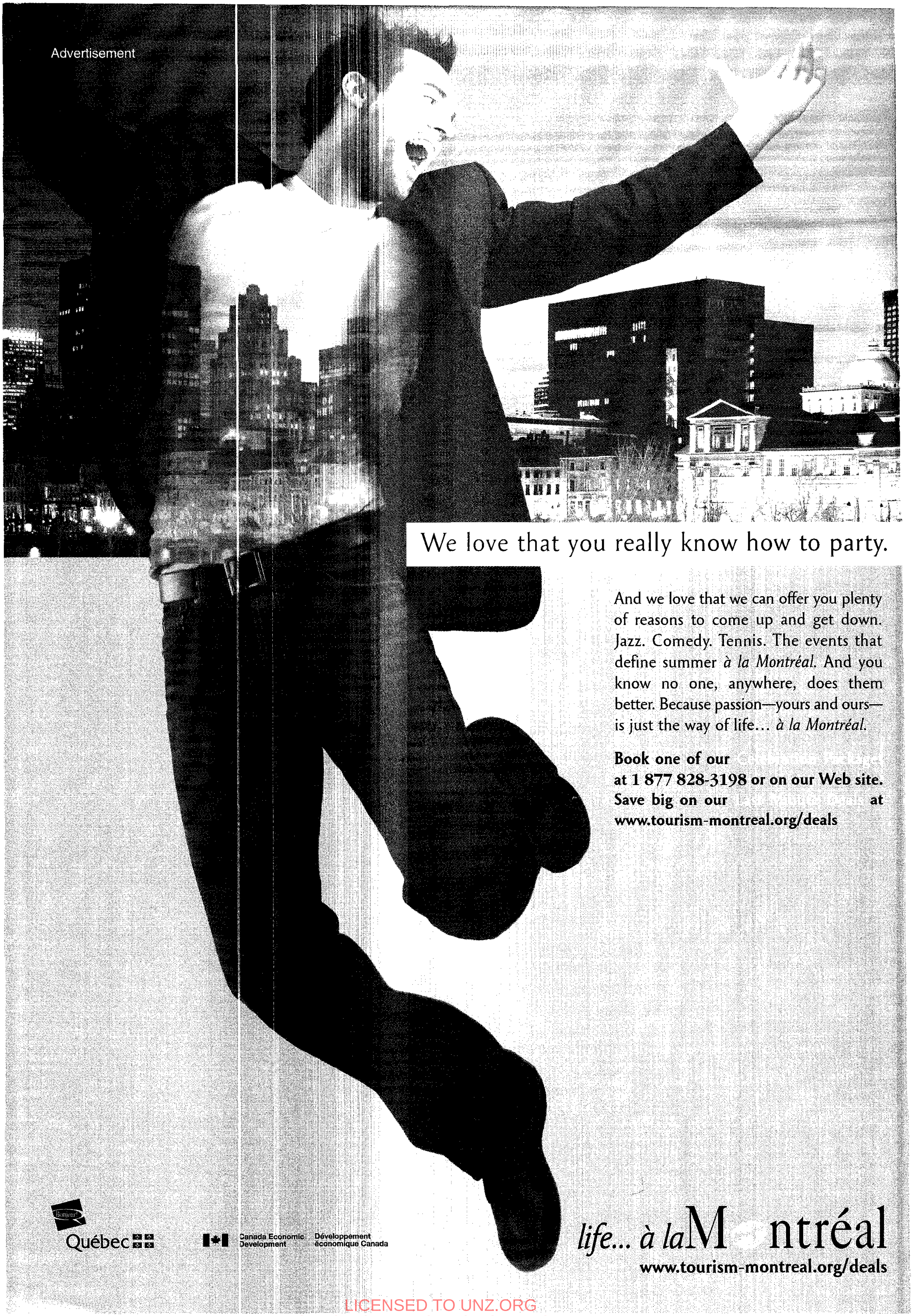
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"You feel hurt. It's natural that you should feel hurt."

"It's also my own business."

"Ah, well. Perhaps she'll get in touch with you. After all."

Penelope did get in touch with Juliet, a couple of weeks later. A birthday card arrived on her—Penelope's—birthday, the nineteenth of June. Her twenty-first birthday. It was the sort of card you send to an acquaintance whose taste you cannot guess. Not crude or jokey or truly witty. Just a drawing of a small bouquet of pansies tied by a thin purple ribbon whose tail spelled out the words "Happy Birthday."

There was no inscription and no signature. At first, Juliet thought that someone had sent this card to Penelope, and forgotten to sign it, and that she, Juliet, had opened it by mistake. Someone who had Penelope's name and birth date on file. Her dentist, maybe, or her driving teacher. But when she checked the writing on the envelope she saw that there had been no mistake: there was her own name, indeed, in Penelope's handwriting.

Postmarks gave you no clue anymore. They all said "Canada Post."

Juliet went to see Christa, who was in Vancouver now, too, in an assisted-living facility in Kitsilano. She had multiple sclerosis. Her room was on the ground floor, with a small private patio, and Juliet sat with her there, looking out at a sunny bit of lawn and the wisteria in bloom along a fence that concealed the garbage bins.

She told Christa the whole story of the trip to Denman Island. She had told nobody else, and had hoped not to have to tell anybody. Every day, on her way home from work, she had wondered if perhaps Penelope would be waiting for her in the apartment. Or at least if there would be a letter, and then there had been—that unkind card—and she had torn it open with her hands shaking.

"It means something," Christa said. "It lets you know that she's O.K. Something will follow. It will. Be patient."

Juliet talked bitterly for a while about Mother Shipton. That was what she had finally decided to call her, having toyed, and become dissatisfied, with Pope Joan. What bloody chicanery, she said. What creepiness, nastiness, behind her second-rate, sweetly religious façade. It was impossible to imagine Penelope's having been taken in by her.

Christa suggested that perhaps Penelope had visited the place because she had considered writing something about it. Some sort of investigative journalism. Field work. The personal angle—the long-winded personal angle—that was so popular nowadays.

"Investigating for six months?" Juliet said. "Penelope could have figured Mother Shipton out in ten minutes."

"It's weird," Christa admitted.

"You don't know more than you're letting on, do you?" Juliet said. "I hate to even ask that. I feel so at sea. I feel stupid. That woman intended me to feel stupid, of course. Like the character who blurts out something in a play and everybody turns away because they all know something she doesn't know—"

"No one writes that kind of play anymore," Christa said. "Now nobody knows anything. No—Penelope didn't take me into her confidence. Why should she? She knows I'd end up telling you. Just hold on. It's one of the trials of parenthood. She hasn't given you many, after all. In a year this will all be ancient history."

Juliet didn't tell Christa that in the end she had not been able to walk away from the Spiritual Balance Centre with dignity. She had turned and cried out beseechingly, furiously, "What did she *tell* you?"

Mother Shipton had stood there watching her, as if she had expected this. A fat pitying smile had stretched her closed lips as she shook her head.

During the next year, Juliet got phone calls, now and then, from people who had been friendly with Penelope. Her reply to their inquiries was always the same. Penelope had decided to take a year off from university. She was travelling. Her agenda was by no means fixed, and Juliet had no way of contacting her, nor any address she could supply.

She did not hear from anybody who had been a close friend. This might mean that people who had been close to Penelope knew quite well where she was. Or it might mean that they, too, were off on trips to foreign countries, had found jobs in other provinces, or had embarked on new lives, too crowded or chancy still to

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allow them to wonder about old friends. (Old friends, at that stage in life, meaning somebody they had not seen for half a year.)

Whenever Juliet came home, the first thing she did was look for the flashing light on her answering machine. Each time, she tried some silly trick—to do with how many steps she took to the phone, how she picked it up, how she breathed. *Let it be her.*

Nothing worked.

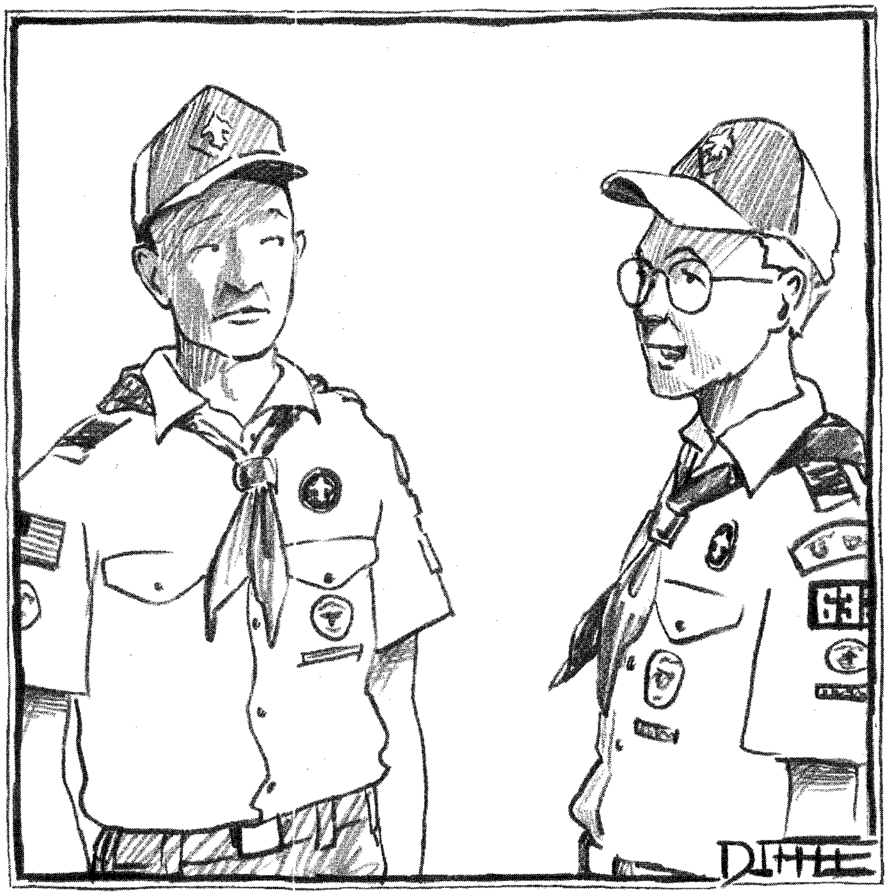
After a while, the world seemed emptied of the people that Penelope had known—the boyfriends she had dropped and the ones who had dropped her, the girls she had gossiped with and probably confided in. Because she had gone to Torrance House, rather than to a public high school, most of her longtime friends had come from out of town. Alaska or Prince George or Peru.

There was no message at Christmas. But in June another card, very much in the style of the first. Not a word written inside. Juliet had a drink of wine before she opened it, then threw it away at once.

She had spurts of weeping, once in a while of uncontrollable shaking, but she emerged from these in quick fits of fury, walking around the house and slapping her fist into her palm. The fury was directed at Mother Shipton, but the image of that woman had faded, and finally Juliet had to recognize that she was really only a convenient target.

All pictures of Penelope were banished to her old bedroom, with the sheaves of drawings she had done before they left Whale Bay, her books, and the European one-cup coffeemaker with the plunger that she'd bought as a present for Juliet with the first money she'd made in her summer job at McDonald's. The door of her bedroom was shut and in time could be passed without disturbance.

Juliet gave a great deal of thought to leaving this apartment, giving herself the benefit of new surroundings. But, as she told Christa, she could not do it, because this was the only address that Penelope had, and mail would not be forwarded for more than three months. After that, there would be no place where her daughter could find her.



"I'm two weeks away from my Pilates badge."

"She could always get you at work," Christa said.

"Who knows how long I'll be there?" Juliet said. "She's probably in some commune where they're not allowed to communicate. Run by a guru who sleeps with all the women and sends them out to beg on the streets. If I'd sent her to Sunday school and taught her to say her prayers this probably never would have happened. I should have done it. I should have. It would have been like an inoculation. I neglected her *spirituality*. As Mother Shipton said."

When Penelope was barely thirteen years old, she had gone away on a camping trip to the Kootenay Mountains of British Columbia, with a friend from Torrance House and the friend's family. Juliet was in favor of this trip. Penelope had been at Torrance House for only one year, and it pleased Juliet that she had already made so firm a friend and been readily accepted by her family. Also that she was going camping—something that regular children did and that Juliet, as a child, had never had the chance to do. Not that she would have wanted to—at Penelope's age, she had already been buried in books—but she welcomed signs that Penelope was turning out to be a more normal sort of girl than she herself had been.

Eric was apprehensive about the whole idea. He thought that Penelope was too young. He didn't like her going on a holiday with people he knew almost nothing about. And now that she went to boarding school they saw too little of her as it was—so why should that time be shortened?

Juliet had another reason: she wanted Penelope out of the way for a couple of weeks, so that she could clear the air between herself and Eric. She wanted things resolved, and they were not resolved. She did not want to have to pretend that all was well, for the sake of the child.

Eric, on the other hand, would have liked nothing better than to see their trouble smoothed over, tucked out of the way. As he saw it, civility would restore good feeling, and the semblance of love would be enough to get by on until love

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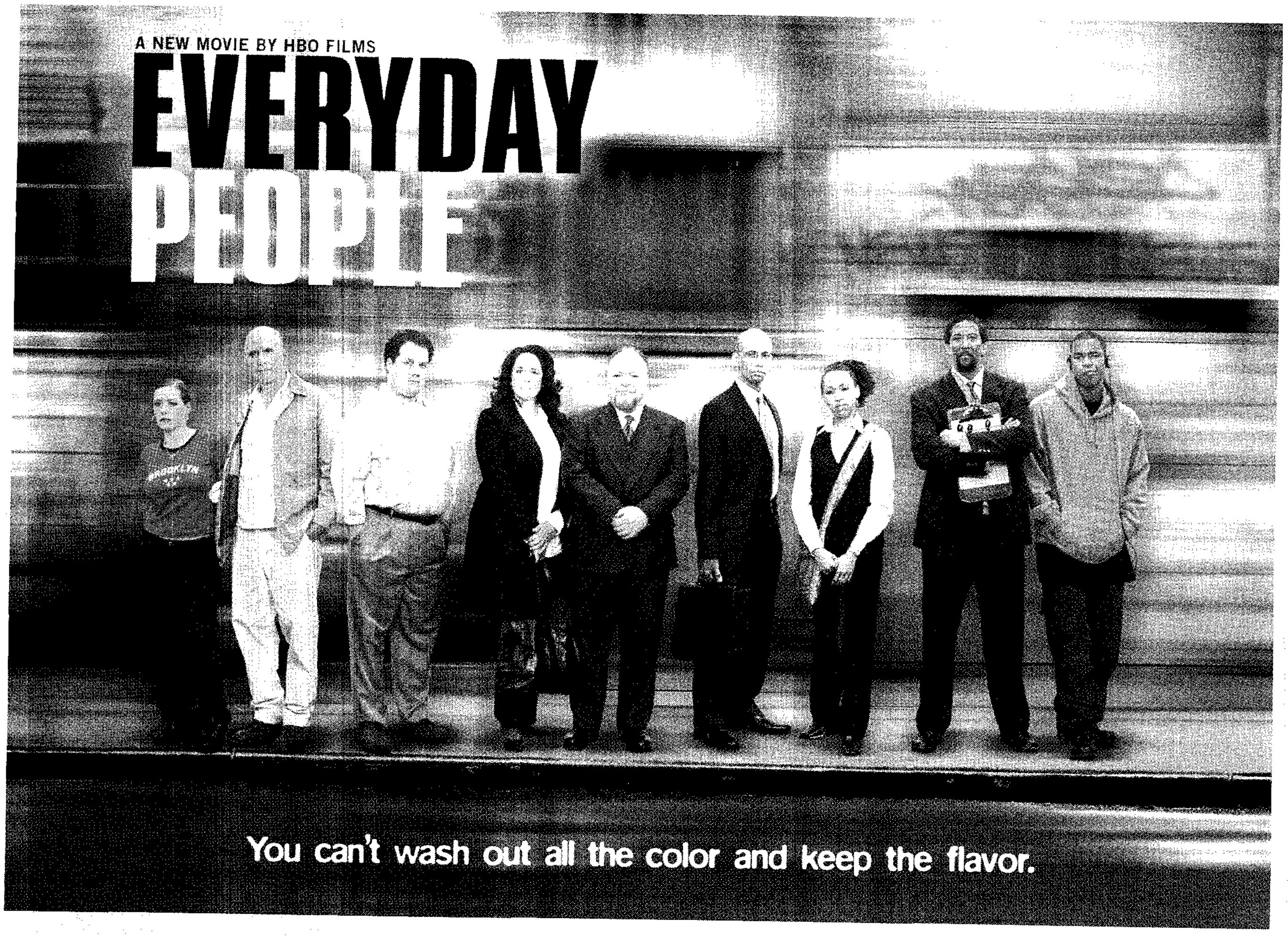
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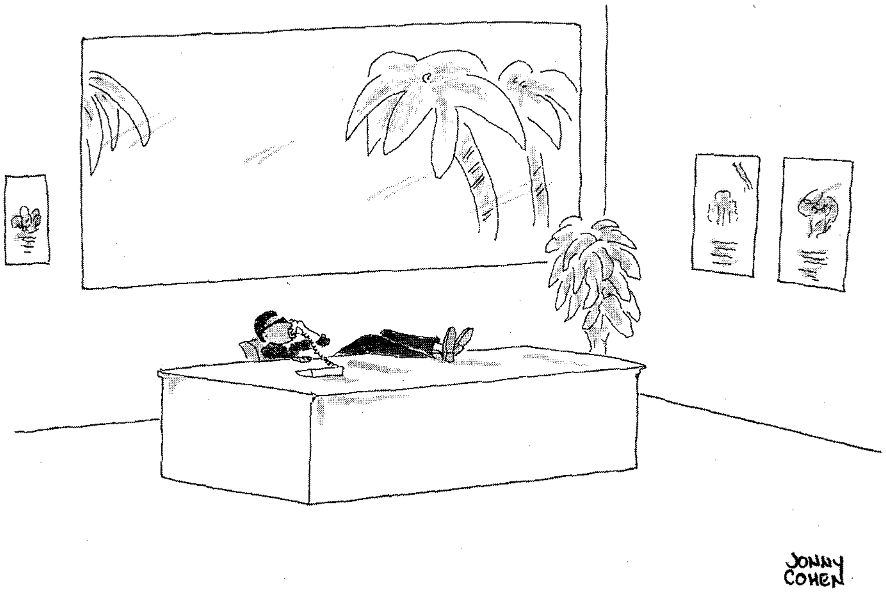

"Sounds great—have your people call your people."

• •

itself could be rediscovered. And if there was never anything more than semblance—well, that would have to do. He could manage with that.

Having Penelope at home, forcing them to behave well—forcing Juliet to behave well, since she was the one, in his opinion, who had stirred up all the rancor—that would suit Eric very well.

Or so Juliet claimed, and created a new source of bitterness and blame, because he missed Penelope badly.

The reason for their quarrel was an old and ordinary one. In the spring, through some trivial disclosure—and the frankness or possibly the malice of their longtime neighbor Ailo, who had always had some reservations about Juliet—Juliet had discovered that Eric had slept with Christa again. She could not reasonably object to what had happened in the time before she and Eric were together. She did not. What she did object to—what she said had broken her heart—had happened after that. (Though still a long time ago, Eric pointed out.)

It had happened when Penelope was a year old and Juliet had taken her back to Ontario to visit her parents. To visit—as she emphasized now—her dying mother. While she was away, and loving and missing Eric with every shred of her being (she now believed this), Eric had simply returned to his old habits.

At first he confessed to once (drunk), but with further prodding, and some drinking in the here and now, he said that possibly it had been more than that.

Possibly? He could not remember? So many times he could not remember?

He could remember.

Christa came to see Juliet, to assure her that it had been nothing serious. (This was Eric's refrain as well.) Juliet told her to go away and never come back. Christa decided that now would be a good time to visit her sister in California.

Juliet's outrage at Christa was actually something of a formality. She did understand that a few rolls in the hay with an old girlfriend (Eric's disastrous description, in an ill-judged attempt to minimize things) were nowhere near as threatening as a hot embrace with some woman newly met. And her outrage at Eric was so fierce and irrepressible as to leave little room for blame of anybody else.

Her contentions were that he did not love her, had never loved her, had mocked her, with Christa, behind her back. He had made her a laughingstock in front of people like Ailo (who, Juliet said, had always hated her). He had treated her—and the love she felt (or had felt) for him—with contempt. He had lived a lie with her. Sex meant nothing to

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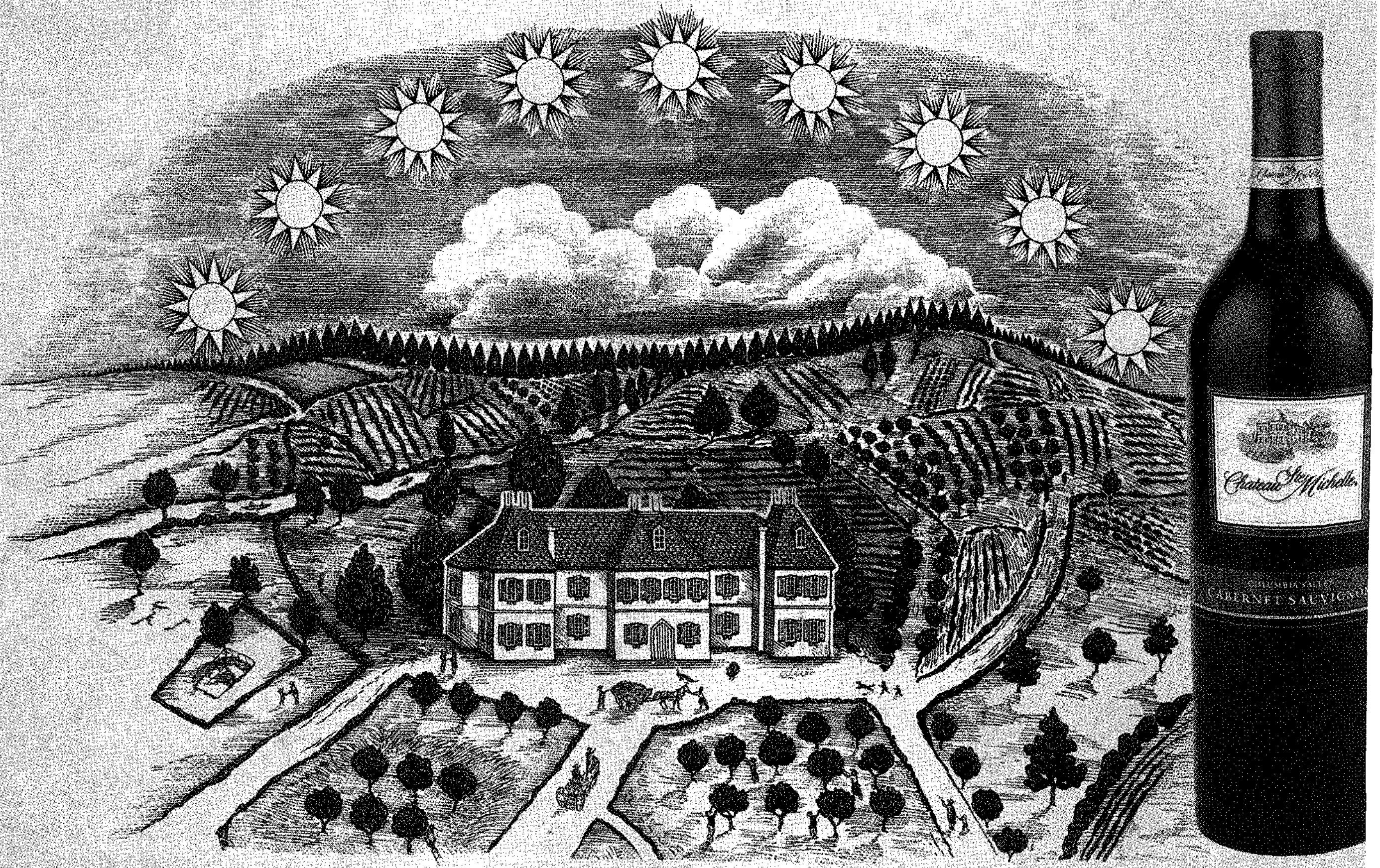

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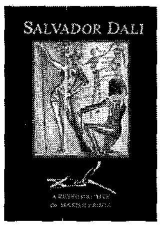

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him, or, at any rate, it did not mean what it meant (had meant) to her—he would have it off with whoever was handy.

Only the last of these contentions had the smallest germ of truth in it, and in her quieter states she knew that. But even that little truth was enough to pull everything down around her. It shouldn't have done so, but it did. And Eric was not able—in all honesty he was not able—to see why. He was not surprised that she should object, make a fuss, even weep (though a woman like Christa wouldn't have), but that she should really be damaged, that she should consider herself bereft of all that had sustained her—and over something that had happened *twelve years ago*—this he could not understand.

Sometimes he believed that she was shamming, making too much of it, and at other times he was full of real grief that he had made her suffer. Their grief aroused them, and they made love magnificently. And each time he thought that that would be the end of it, that their miseries were over. Each time he was mistaken.

In bed, Juliet told him lightheartedly about Samuel and Mrs. Pepys, inflamed with passion under similar circumstances. (Since she had more or less given up on her classical studies, she was reading widely, and nowadays everything she read seemed to have to do with adultery.) Never so often and never so hot, Pepys had said, though he also recorded that his wife thought of murdering him in his sleep. Juliet laughed about this, but half an hour later, when Eric came to say goodbye before going out in the boat to check his prawn traps, she showed him a stony face and gave him a kiss of resignation, as if he'd been going to meet a woman out in the middle of the bay under a rainy sky.

There was more than rain. The water was hardly choppy when Eric went out, but later in the afternoon a wind came up suddenly, from the southeast, and tore up the waters of Desolation Sound and Malaspina Strait. It continued almost until dark—which did not really fall until around eleven o'clock in this last week of June. By then, a sailboat from Campbell River was missing, with three adults and two children aboard. Also two fish boats, one with two men aboard and the other with only one man—Eric.

The next morning was calm and sunny—the mountains, the waters, the shores, all sleek and sparkling.

It was possible, of course, that none of these people were lost, that they had found shelter and spent the night in any of the multitude of little bays along the coast. That was more likely to be true of the fishermen than of the family in the sailboat, who were not locals but vacationers from Seattle. Boats went out at once, that morning, to search the mainland and island shores and the water.

The drowned children were found first, in their life jackets, and by the end of the day the bodies of their parents were located as well. A grandfather who had accompanied them was not found until the following day. The bodies of the men who had been fishing together were lost, though the remnants of their boat washed up near Refuge Cove.

Eric's body was recovered on the third day. Juliet was not allowed to see it. Something had got at him, she was told (meaning some animal), after the body was washed ashore.

It was perhaps because of this—because there was no question of viewing the body and no need for an undertaker—that the idea caught hold among his old friends and fellow-fishermen of burning Eric on the beach. Juliet did not object to this. A death certificate had to be made out, so the doctor who came to Whale Bay once a week was telephoned at his office in Powell River, and he gave Ailo, who was a registered nurse and his weekly assistant, the authority to do it.

There was plenty of driftwood around, plenty of the sea-salted bark that makes a superior fire. In a couple of hours, all was ready. News had spread—somehow, even at such short notice, women began arriving with food. It was Ailo who took charge of this half-pagan ceremony—her Scandinavian blood, her upright carriage and flowing white hair made her a natural for the role of Widow of the Sea. Children ran about on the logs, and were shooed away from the growing pyre, the shrouded, surprisingly meagre bundle that was Eric. A coffee urn was supplied by one of the churches, and cartons of beer, bottles of alcohol of all sorts were left discreetly, for the time being, in the trunks of cars and the cabs of trucks.

The question arose of who would speak and who would light the pyre. The men who headed the preparations asked Juliet if she would do it. And Juliet, brittle and busy, handing out mugs of coffee, told them that they had it wrong—as the widow, she was supposed to throw herself into the flames. She actually laughed as she said this, and those who had asked her backed off, afraid that she was getting hysterical. The man who had often been Eric's partner in the boat agreed to do the lighting, but said that he was no speaker. It occurred to some that he would not have been a good choice anyway, since his wife was an evangelical Anglican, and he might have felt obliged to say things that would have distressed Eric, if he had been able to hear them. Then Ailo's husband offered. He was a little man who had been disfigured by a fire on a boat, years ago, a bitter socialist and atheist, and in his talk he rather lost track of Eric, except to claim him as a Brother in the Battle. He went on at surprising length, and this was ascribed, afterward, to the life that he led under the rule of Ailo. There was some restlessness in the crowd before he finally stopped speaking, some feeling that the event was not as splendid, or solemn, or heartrending, as had been expected. But when the fire began to burn this feeling vanished, and there was great concentration, even, or especially, among the children, until the moment when one of the men cried, "Get the kids out of here." This was when the flames had reached the body, and there was a realization, rather late, that consumption of fat, of heart and kidneys and liver, might produce explosive or sizzling noises that would be disconcerting to hear. A good many of the children were hauled away by their mothers—some willingly, some to their dismay. And the final act of the fire became a mostly male ceremony. Slightly scandalous, though not in any way illegal.

Juliet stayed, wide-eyed, rocking on her haunches, face pressed against the heat. She was not quite there. She thought of whoever it was—Trelawny?—snatching Shelley's heart out of the flames. The heart, with its long history of significance. Strange to think how even at that time, not so long ago, one fleshly organ had been thought so precious, the site of courage and love. It was just flesh burning. Not Eric.

Penelope knew nothing of what was going on. There was a short item in the Vancouver paper—not about the burning on the beach, of course, just about the drowning—but no newspapers or radio reports reached her, deep in the Kootenay Mountains. When she got back to Vancouver, she phoned home, from her friend Heather's house. Christa answered—she had got back from California too late for the ceremony, but was staying with Juliet, and helping as much as she could. She told Penelope that Juliet was not there—it was a lie—and asked to speak to Heather's mother. She explained what had happened, and said that she

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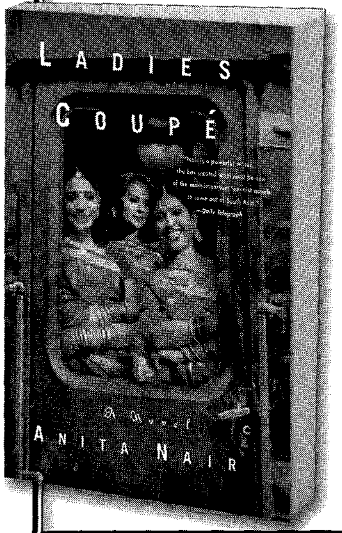

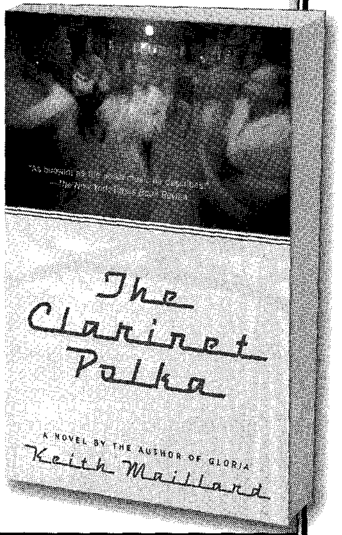

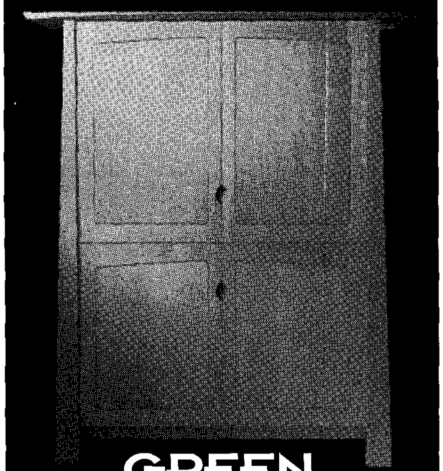
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David Foster Wallace:
"In a word, terrible."

would be driving Juliet to Vancouver—they would leave at once—and Juliet would tell Penelope herself when they got there.

Christa dropped Juliet at the house where Penelope was, and Juliet went inside alone. Penelope was waiting in the sunroom. She received the news with an expression of fright, then—when Juliet put her arms around her—of something like embarrassment. Perhaps in Heather's house, in the white-and-green-and-orange sunroom, with Heather's brothers shooting baskets in the back yard, news so dire could hardly penetrate. The burning was not mentioned—in this house and neighborhood it would have seemed uncivilized, grotesque. In this house, also, Juliet's manner was more sprightly than she intended.

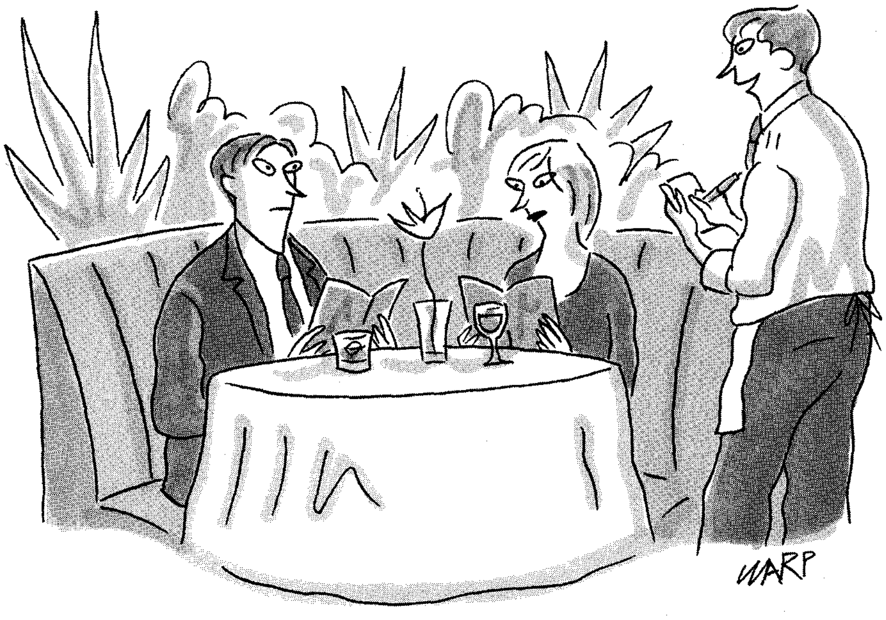
Heather's mother entered after a tiny knock, with glasses of iced tea. Penelope gulped hers down and went to join Heather, who had been lurking in the hall. Heather's mother then had a talk with Juliet. She apologized for intruding with practical matters but said that time was short. She and Heather's father were driving east in a few days' time to see relatives. They would be gone for a month, and had planned to take Heather with them. But now Heather had decided that she did not want to go; she had begged to stay here in the house, with Penelope. A fourteen-year-old and a thirteen-year-old could not be left alone in the house, and it had occurred to her that Juliet might like some time away from Whale Bay, a respite, after what she had been through. After her tragic loss.

So Juliet found herself living in a different world, in a large spotless house, brightly and thoughtfully decorated, with what are called conveniences—but to her were luxuries—on every hand. This on a curving street lined with similar houses, behind trimmed bushes and extravagant flower beds. Even the weather, for that month, was flawless—warm, breezy, dazzling. Heather and Penelope went swimming, played badminton in the back yard, went to the movies, baked cookies, gorged, dieted, worked on their tans, filled the house with music whose lyrics seemed to Juliet sappy and irritating, sometimes invited girlfriends over, did not exactly invite boys but held long, taunting, aimless conversations with those who passed the house or gathered next door. By chance, Juliet heard Penelope say to one of the visiting girls, "Well, I hardly knew him really."

She was speaking about her father.

How strange.

She had never been afraid to go out in the boat, as Juliet was, when there was a chop on the water. She had pestered Eric to take her and was often successful. Following after him, in her businesslike orange life jacket, carrying what gear she could manage, Penelope always wore an expression of particular seriousness and dedication. She took note of the setting of the traps, and became skillful, quick,



"Would you like the extended service plan with that?"

and ruthless at the deheading and bagging of the catch. At a certain stage of her childhood—say, from eight to eleven—she had always said that she was going to have her own boat when she grew up. And Juliet had thought it was possible that Penelope would choose that life, since she was bright but not bookish, and exuberantly physical and brave. But Eric, out of Penelope's hearing, said that he hoped the idea would wear off; he wouldn't wish the life on anybody. He spoke about the hardship and uncertainty that he had chosen, although, at the same time, he took pride, Juliet thought, in those very things.

And now he had been dismissed. By Penelope, who had recently painted her toenails purple and was sporting a temporary tattoo on her midriff. He who had filled her life. She had dismissed him.

But Juliet was doing the same thing, in a way. Of course, she was busy looking for a job and a place to live. She had already put the house in Whale Bay up for sale—she could not imagine staying there now. She had sold the truck and given away Eric's tools, and the traps that had been recovered, and the dinghy. Ailo had come and taken the dog.

Juliet had applied for a job in the reference department of the university library and a job at the public library, and she had a feeling that she would get one or the other. She began to look for an apartment. The cleanness, tidiness, and manageability of city life kept surprising her. This was how people lived where men's work did not take place out-of-doors, and where the various operations connected with it did not end up indoors. Where the weather might be a factor in your mood but never in your life, where such dire matters as the changing habits and availability of prawns or salmon were merely interesting, or not remarked upon at all. The life she had been leading at Whale Bay, such a short time ago, seemed haphazard, cluttered, exhausting, by comparison. And she herself was cleansed of the moods of the last months—she was lively and capable, and better-looking.

Eric should see her now.

She thought about Eric in this way all the time. It was not that she failed to remember that he was dead—that did not happen for a moment. But nevertheless she kept referring to him, in her mind, as if he were still the person to whom her existence mattered more than it could to anyone else. As if he were still the person in whose eyes she hoped to shine. Also the person to whom she presented arguments, information, surprises. This was such a habit with her, and took place so automatically, that the fact of his death did not seem to interfere with it.

Nor was their last quarrel entirely resolved. She held him to account, still, for his betrayal. When she flaunted herself a little now, it was in response to that.

The storm, the recovery of the body, the burning on the beach—that was all like a pageant that she had been compelled to watch and to believe in. It still had nothing to do with Eric and herself.

She got the job at the university reference library; she found a two-bedroom apartment that she could just afford; Penelope went back to Torrance House as a day student. Their affairs at Whale Bay were wound up, their life there finished. Even Christa was moving out, coming to Vancouver in the spring.

On a day before Christa or spring had arrived, a day in February, Juliet stood in the shelter at the campus bus stop after work. The day's rain had stopped, there was a band of clear sky in the west, red where the sun had gone down, out over the Strait of Georgia. This sign of lengthening days, the promise of a change of season, had an effect on her that was unexpected and crushing.

She realized that Eric was dead.

It was as if all this time, while she was in Vancouver, he had been waiting for her somewhere else, waiting to see if she would resume her life with him. As if being with him were an option that had stayed open. Her life since she came to Vancouver had been lived against a backdrop of Eric, without her having quite understood that Eric did not exist. That nothing of him existed. That even the memory of him, in the daily and ordinary world, was in retreat.

So this was grief. She felt as if a sack of cement had been poured into her and quickly hardened. She could barely move. Getting onto the bus, getting off the bus, walking half a block to her building was like climbing a cliff. And now she had to hide this from Penelope.

At the supper table she began to shake. She could not loosen her fingers to

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Something was pouring out. Filling the field
and making it vacant. A wind blowing them
sideways as they moved forward. The crying
as before. Suddenly I understood why they left
the empty bowls on the table, in the empty hut
overlooking the sea. And knew the meaning
of the heron breaking branches, spreading
his wings in order to rise up out of the dark
woods into the night sky. I understood about
the lovers and the river in January.
Heard the crying out as a battlement,
of greatness, and then the dying begin.
The height of passion. Saw the breaking
of the moon and shattering of the sun. Believed
in the miracle because of the half heard
and the other half seen. How they ranged
and how they fed. Let loose their cries.
One could call it the agony in the garden,
or the paradise, depending on whether
the joy was at the beginning, or after.

—*Linda Gregg*

drop her knife and fork. Penelope came around the table and pried her hands open. She said, "It's Dad, isn't it?"

Juliet afterward told a few people—Christa was one—that these seemed the most utterly absolving, the most tender words that anybody had ever said to her.

Penelope ran her cool hands up and down the insides of Juliet's arms. She phoned the library the next day to say that her mother was sick, and she took care of her for a couple of days, staying home from school until Juliet had recovered. Or at least until the worst was over.

During those days, Juliet told Penelope everything. About Christa, the fight, the burning on the beach (which she had so far managed, almost miraculously, to conceal from her). Everything.

"I shouldn't burden you with all this."

Penelope said, "Yeah, well, maybe not." But added staunchly, "I forgive you. I guess I'm not a baby."

Juliet went back into the world. The sort of fit she had had at the bus stop recurred, but never so powerfully.

Through her work at the library, she met some people from the provincial television channel, and took a job they offered. She had worked there for about a year when she began to do interviews. All the indiscriminate reading she'd done for years (and that Ailo had so disapproved of, in her days at Whale Bay), all the bits and pieces of information she'd picked up, her random appetite and quick assimilation now came in handy. She cultivated a self-deprecating, faintly teasing manner that seemed to go over well. On camera, few things fazed her. But at home she would march back and forth, letting out whimpers or curses as she recalled some perceived glitch or fluster or, worse still, a mispronunciation.

After five years, the birthday cards stopped coming.

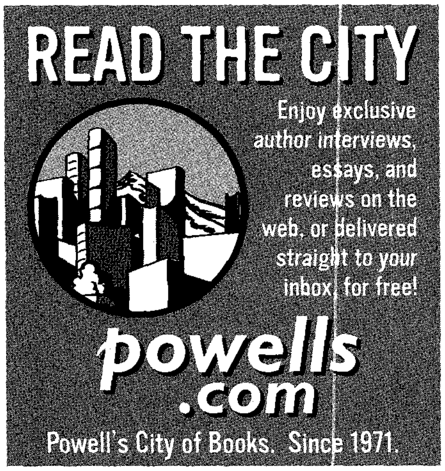
"It doesn't mean anything," Christa said. "They were just to tell you that she's alive somewhere. Now she figures you've got the message. She trusts you not to send some tracker after her. That's all."

"Did I put too much on her?"

"Oh, Jule."

"I don't mean just with Eric dying. Other men, later. I let her see too much misery. My stupid misery."

For Juliet had had two affairs during the years that Penelope was between fourteen and twenty-one, and during both of these she had managed to fall hectically in love, in a way that left her



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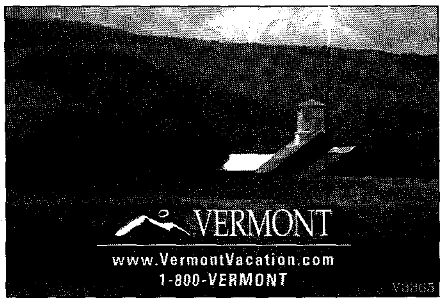

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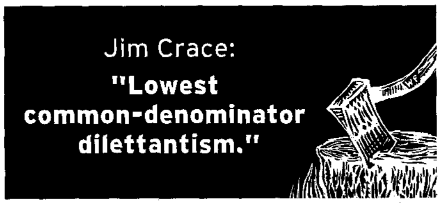

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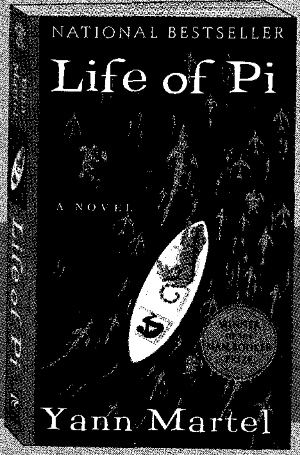
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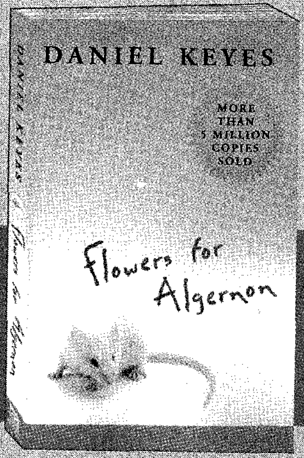
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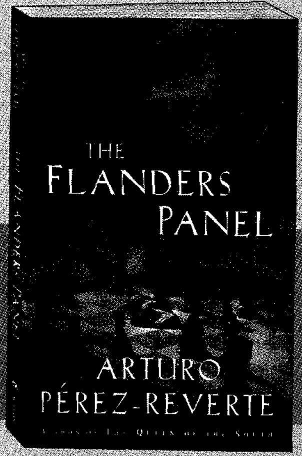
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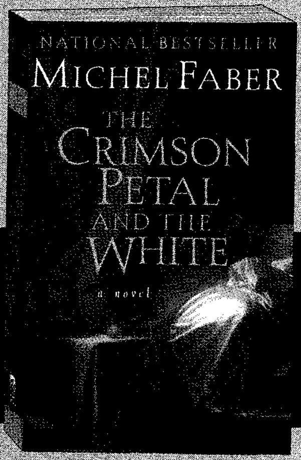
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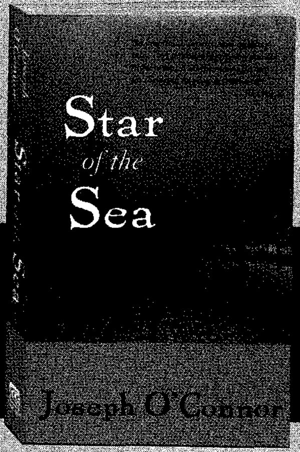
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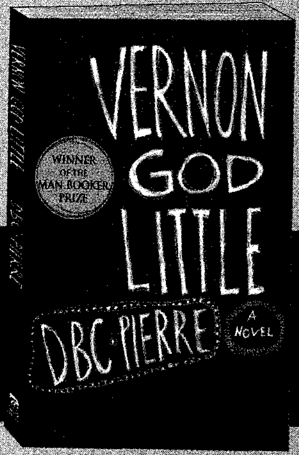
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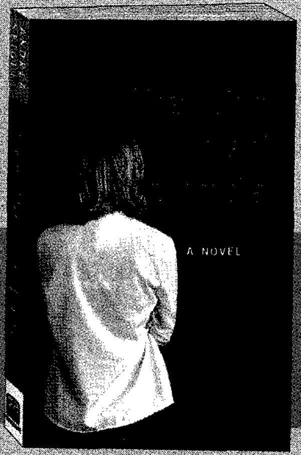

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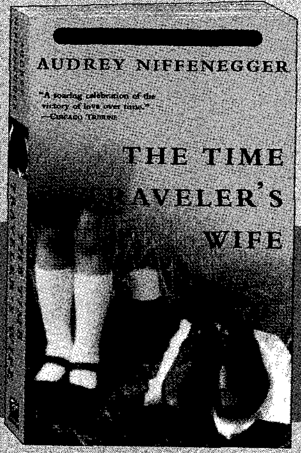
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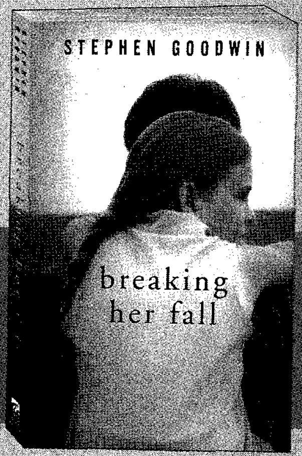
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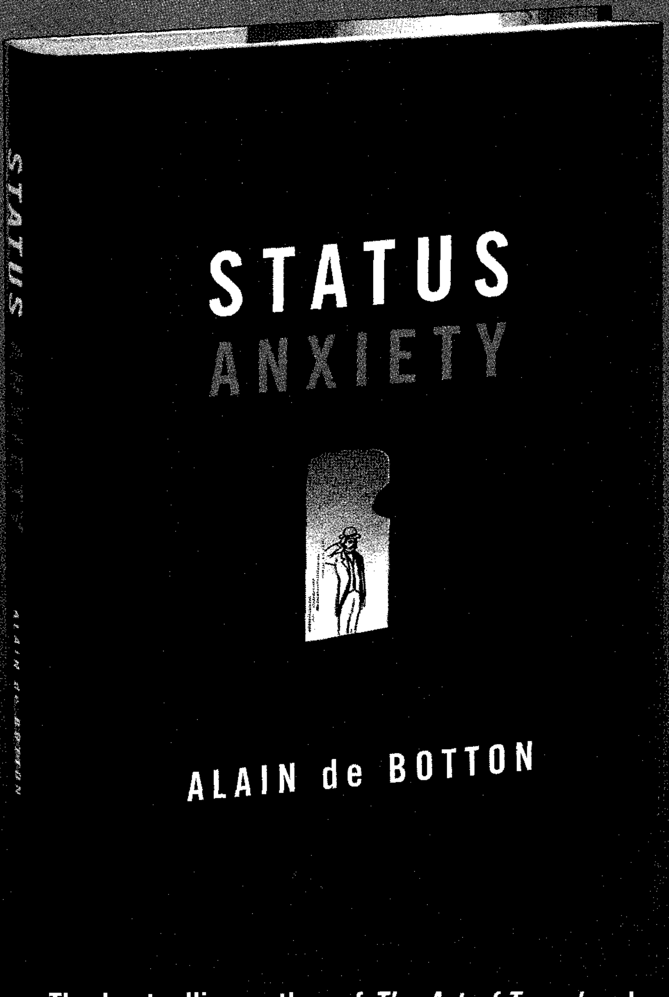
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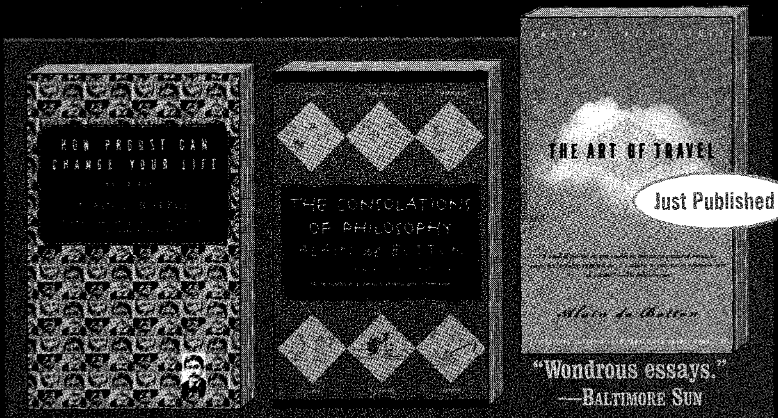
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ashamed afterward. One of the men was much older than she, and solidly married. The other was a good deal younger, and alarmed by her ready emotions. Later she wondered at these herself. She really had cared nothing for him, she said.

"I didn't think you did," said Christa, who was tired. "I don't know."

"Oh, Christ. I was such a fool. I don't get like that about men anymore. Do I?"

"No, Jule. No." Christa did not mention that this might be due to a lack of candidates.

"Actually, I didn't do anything so terrible," Juliet said then, brightening up. "Why do I keep lamenting that it's my fault? She's a conundrum, that's all. I need to face that. A conundrum and a cold fish," she added, in a parody of resolution.

"No," Christa said.

"No," Juliet said. "I know that's not true."

After the second June had passed without any word, Juliet decided to move. She found an apartment in a high-rise building in the West End. She meant to throw away the contents of Penelope's room, but in the end she stuffed it all into garbage bags and carried it with her. She had only one bedroom here, but there was storage space in the basement.

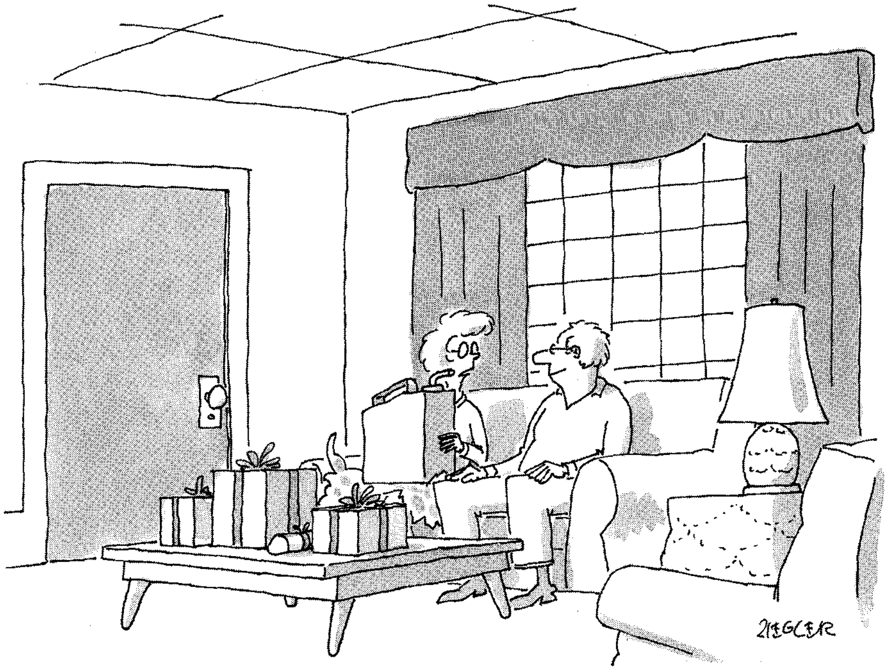
She took up jogging, in Stanley Park. She seldom mentioned Penelope, even to Christa. She had a boyfriend now, who had never heard anything about her daughter.

Christa grew thinner and moodier. Quite suddenly, one January, she died.

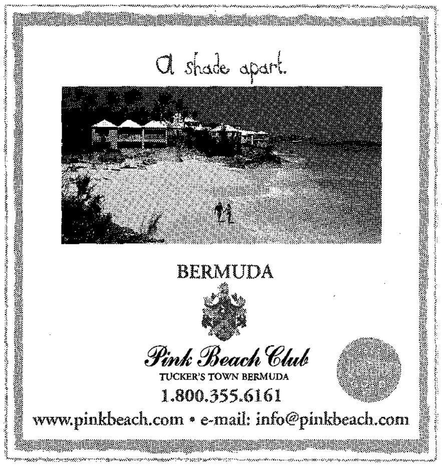
You don't go on forever appearing on television. However agreeable the viewers have found your face, there comes a time when they'd prefer somebody new. Juliet was offered other jobs—researching, writing voice-overs for nature shows—but she refused them cheerfully, describing herself as in need of a total change. Her boyfriend got a teaching job in China. She went back to classical studies—an even smaller department than it used to be. She intended to resume writing her thesis, to get her Ph.D. She moved out of the high-rise apartment and into a bachelor flat to save money.

The flat was in the basement of a house, but the sliding doors at the back opened out at ground level. And there she had a little brick-paved patio, a trellis with sweet peas and clematis, herbs and flowers in pots. For the first time in her life and in a very small way, she was a gardener, as Sam had been.

Sometimes people said to her—in stores or on the campus bus—"Excuse



"Why, thank you, dear—I suppose five gallons of gas is a thoughtful birthday gift."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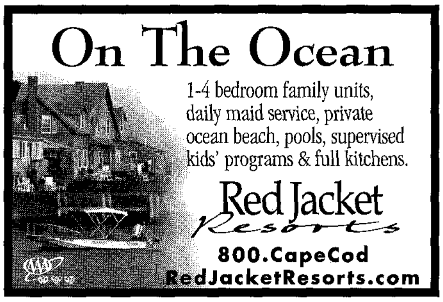
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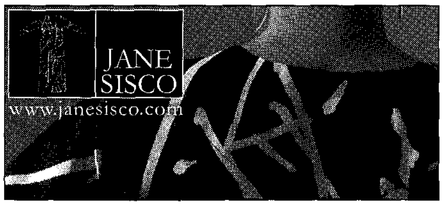
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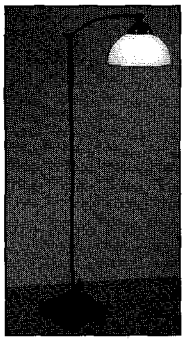

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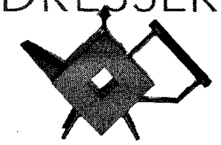

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me, but your face is so familiar," or "Aren't you the lady that used to be on television?" But after a year or so this passed. She spent a lot of time sitting and reading, drinking coffee at a sidewalk café, and nobody noticed her. She let her hair grow out. It was a silvery brown now, fine and wavy. She was reminded of Sara, of her soft, fair, flyaway hair, going gray and then white.

She did not have room to have people to dinner anymore, and she had lost interest in recipes. She ate meals that were nourishing enough, but monotonous. Without exactly meaning to, she lost contact with most of her friends.

It was no wonder. She lived a life now that was as different as possible from the life of the public, vivacious, concerned, endlessly well-informed woman she had been. She lived among books, reading through most of her waking hours, often being compelled to deepen, to alter whatever premise she had started with. She sometimes missed the world news for a week at a time.

She had given up on her old thesis and become interested in some writers referred to as the Greek novelists, whose work came rather late in the history of Greek literature (starting in the first century B.C.E., as she had now learned to call it, and continuing into the early Middle Ages). Aristides, Longus, Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius. Much of their work was lost or fragmentary, and was also reported to be indecent. But there was a romance written by Heliodorus, called the Aethiopica (originally stored in a private library and retrieved during the siege of Buda), which had been known in Europe since it was printed, in Basel, in 1534.

In this story, the Queen of Ethiopia gives birth to a white baby and is afraid that she will be accused of adultery. So she puts the child, a daughter, in the care of the gymnosophists—that is, the naked philosophers, who are hermits and mystics. The girl, who is called Charicleia, is eventually taken to Delphi, where she becomes one of the priestesses of Artemis. There she meets a noble Thessalian named Theagenes, who falls in love with her and, with the help of a clever Egyptian, carries her off. The Ethiopian Queen, as it turns out, has never ceased to long for her daughter and has hired this very Egyptian to search for

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Nick Downes

her. Mischance and adventures continue until all the main characters meet at Meroë and Charicleia is rescued—rescued once more—just as she is about to be sacrificed by her own father.

Interesting themes were as thick as flies here, and the tale had a natural continuing fascination for Juliet. Particularly the part about the gymnosophists. She tried to find out as much as she could about these people—who were usually referred to as Hindu philosophers. Was India, in this case, presumed to be adjacent to Ethiopia? No—Heliodorus came late enough to know his geography better than that. The gymnosophists were wanderers, far spread, attracting and repelling those they lived among, with their ironclad devotion to purity of life and thought, their contempt for possessions, even for clothing and food. Whatever happened to her later, a girl who had spent time among them might well be left with some perverse hankering for a bare, ecstatic life.

Juliet had made a new friend, named Larry. He taught Greek, and he let Juliet store the garbage bags full of Penelope's belongings in the basement of his house. He liked to imagine how they might make the Aethiopica into a musical. Juliet collaborated in this fantasy, even to the point of making up some marvellously silly songs and preposterous stage effects. But she was secretly drawn to devising a different ending to the story, one that would involve renunciation, and a backward search, in which the girl would be sure to meet fakes and charlatans, impostors, shabby imitations of what she was really looking for. Which was reconciliation, at last, with the erring, repentant, essentially greathearted Queen of Ethiopia.

Juliet was almost certain that she had seen Mother Shipton here in Vancouver. She had taken some clothes that she would never wear again (her wardrobe had grown increasingly utilitarian) to a Salvation Army thrift store, and as she set the bag down in the receiving room she saw a fat old woman in a muumuu, fixing tags onto trousers. The woman was chatting with the other workers—she had the air of a supervisor, a cheerful but vigilant overseer, or perhaps the air of a woman who would assume that role, whether she had any official superiority or not.

If she was in fact Mother Shipton, she had come down in the world. But not by very much. For if she was Mother Shipton would she not have such reserves of buoyancy and self-approbation as to make real downfall impossible?

Reserves of advice, pernicious advice, as well.

She came to us here in great hunger.

Juliet had told Larry about Penelope. She had to have one person who knew.

"Should I have talked to her about a noble life?" she said. "Sacrifice? Opening your heart to the needs of strangers? I never thought of it. I must have acted as if it would be good enough if she turned out like me."

Larry wanted nothing from Juliet but her friendship and good humor. He was what used to be called an old-fashioned bachelor, asexual as far as she could tell (but probably she could not tell far enough), squeamish about any personal revelations, endlessly entertaining.

Two other men had appeared, who wanted more from her. One of them she had met when he sat down at her sidewalk table. He was a recent widower. She liked him, but his loneliness was so raw and his pursuit of her so desperate that she became alarmed.

The other man was Christa's brother Gary, whom Juliet had met several times while Christa was alive. His company suited her—in many ways he was like Christa. His marriage had ended long ago, and he was not desperate—in fact, she knew from Christa that there had been women ready to marry him, whom he had avoided. But he was too rational—his choice of her verged on being cold-blooded. There was something humiliating about it. But why humiliating? It was not as if she loved him.

It was while she was still seeing Gary that she ran into Heather, on a downtown street. Juliet and Gary had just come out of a cinema where they had seen an early-evening movie, and they were talking about where to go for dinner. It was a warm night in summer, the light not yet gone from the sky.

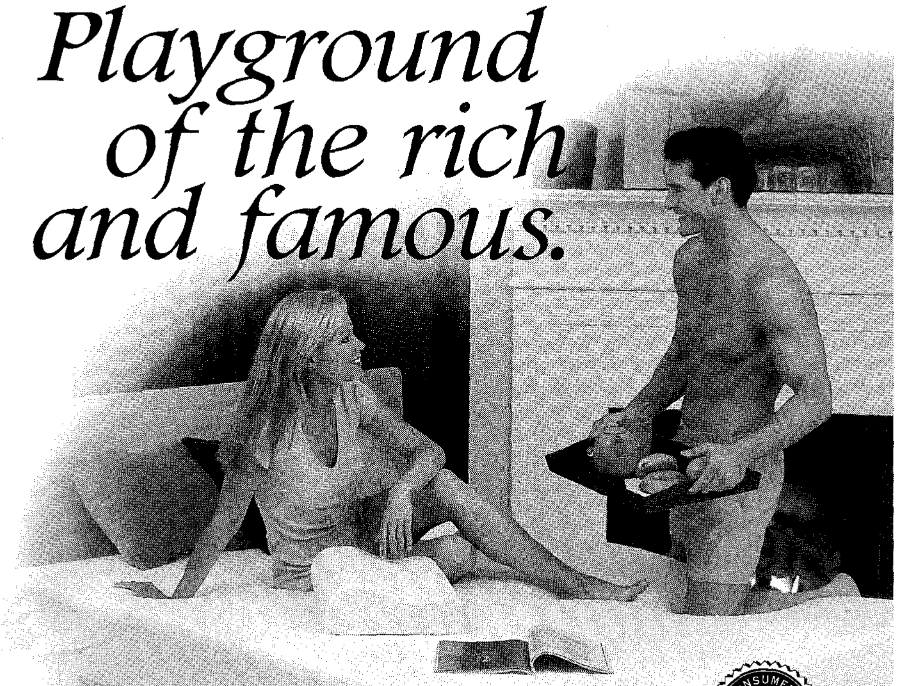
A woman detached herself from a group on the sidewalk and came straight at Juliet. A thin woman, perhaps in her late thirties. Fashionable, with taffy streaks in her dark hair.

"Mrs. Porteous. Mrs. Porteous."

Juliet knew the voice, though she did not quite know the face. Heather.

"This is incredible," Heather said. "I'm here for three days and I'm leaving tomorrow. My husband's at a conference. I was just thinking that I hardly know anybody here anymore and then I turn around and see you."

Juliet asked her where she was living now and she said, "Connecticut. And just about three weeks ago I was visiting Josh—you remember my brother Josh?—I was visiting Josh and his family in Edmonton, and I ran into Penelope. Just like this, on the street. No—actually, it was in the mall, that humongous mall they have. She had a couple of her kids with her—she'd brought them down to get uniforms for that school they go to. The boys. We were both flabbergasted. I didn't know her right away, but she recognized me. She'd flown down, of course. From that place way up north. But she



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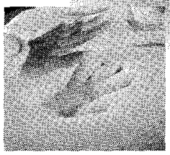

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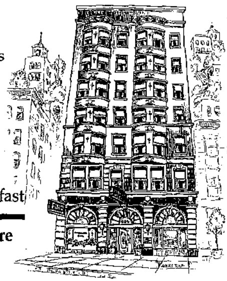

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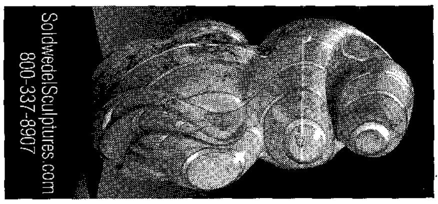

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says it's quite civilized, really. And she said that you were still living here. But I'm with these friends—they're my husband's friends—and I really haven't had time to ring you up."

Juliet made some gesture to say that of course there had not been time and she had not expected to be rung up.

She asked how many children Heather had.

"Three. They're all monsters. I hope they grow up in a hurry. But my life's a picnic compared with Penelope's. *Five.*"

"Yes."

"I have to run now—we're going to see a movie. But it was great meeting you like this. My mom and dad moved to White Rock. They used to see you all the time on TV. They used to brag to their friends that you'd lived in our house. They say you're not on anymore. Did you get sick of it?"

"Something like that."

"I'm coming, I'm coming." She hugged and kissed Juliet, the way everybody did now, and ran to join her companions.

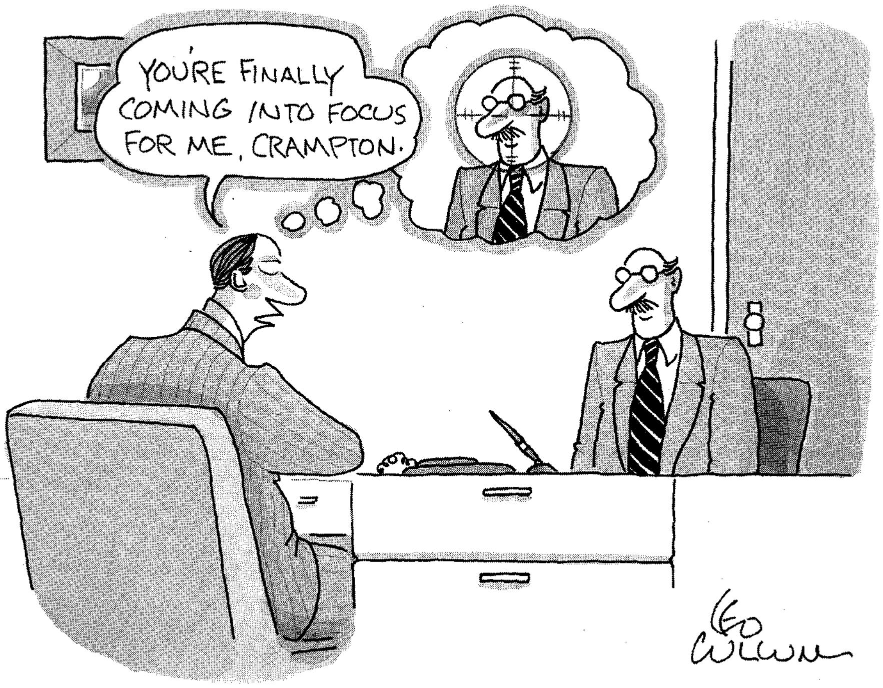
So. Penelope did not live in Edmonton—she had *come down* to Edmonton. Flown down. That meant she must live in Whitehorse or Yellowknife. Where else was there that she could describe as "quite civilized"? Maybe she was being ironical, mocking Heather a bit, when she said that.

She had five children, and two, at least, were boys. They were being outfitted with school uniforms. That meant a private school. That meant money.

Heather had not known Penelope at first. Did that mean that she had aged? That she was out of shape after five pregnancies, that she had not *taken care of herself*? As Heather had. As Juliet had, to a certain extent. That Penelope was one of those women to whom the whole idea of such a struggle seemed ridiculous, a confession of insecurity? Or just something that she had no time for—far outside of her consideration?

Juliet had thought of Penelope as being involved with transcendentalists, as having become a mystic, and spending her life in contemplation. Or else—rather the opposite, but still radically simple and pure—earning her living in a rough and risky way, fishing, perhaps with a husband, perhaps with some husky little children, in the cold waters of the Inside Passage off the British Columbia coast.

Not at all. She was living the life of a prosperous practical matron. Married to a doctor, maybe, or to one of those civil servants who were managing the northern parts of the country just as their control was being gradually, but with some fanfare, relinquished to the native people. If she ever met Penelope again they would laugh about how wrong she had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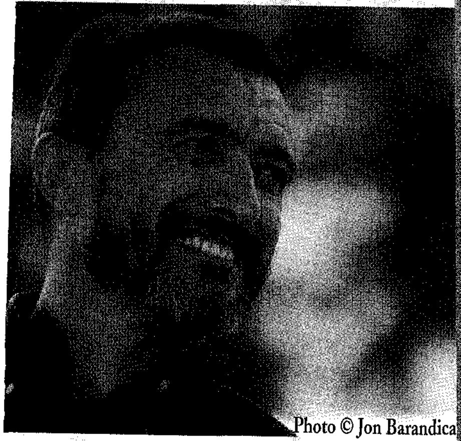
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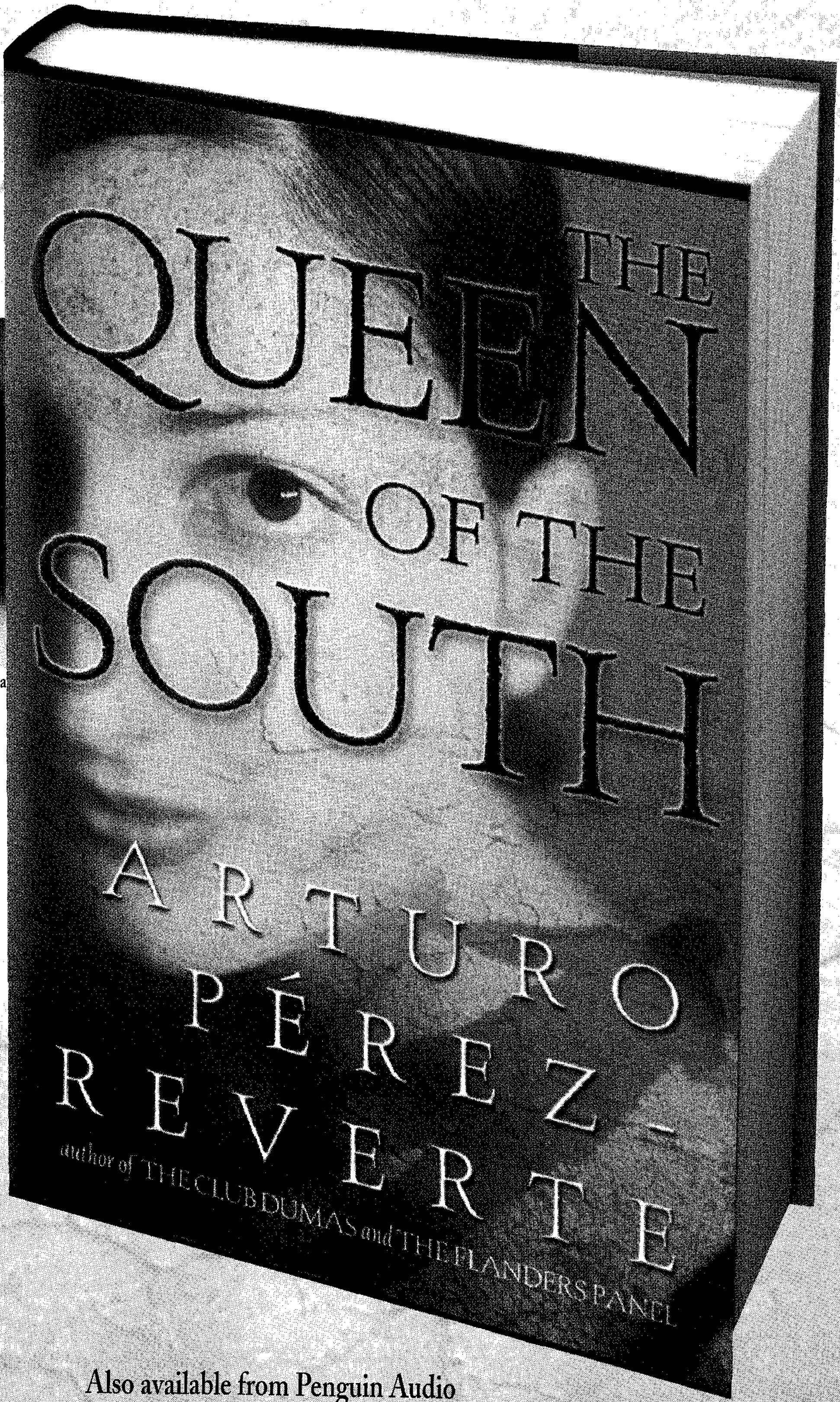
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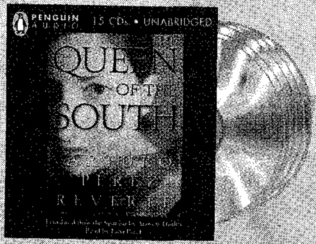
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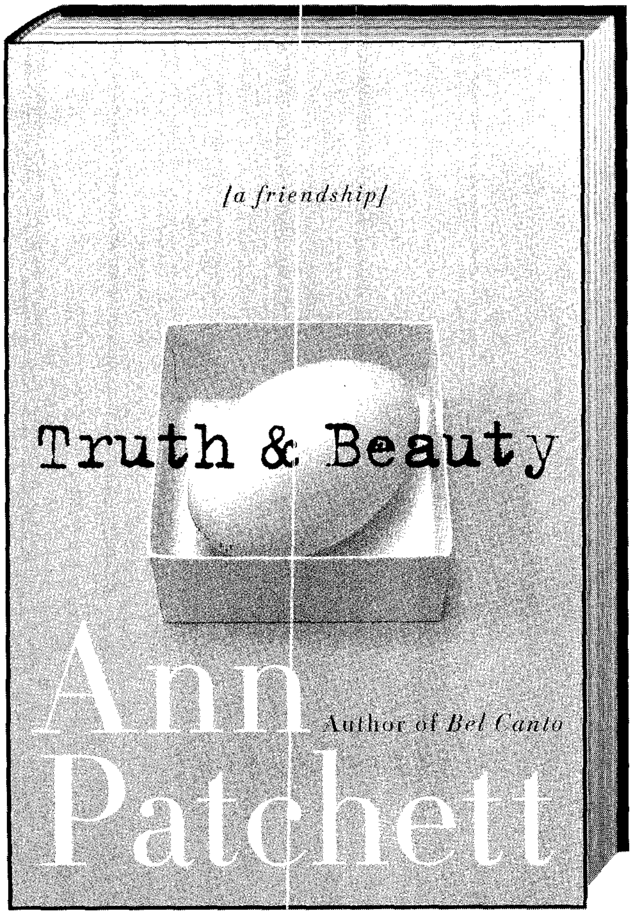
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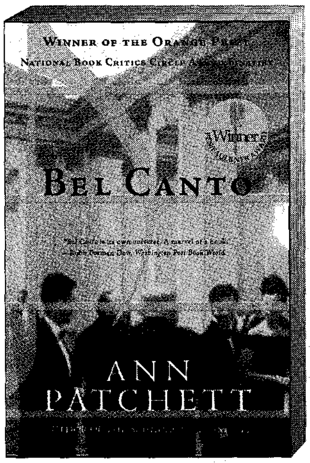
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been. When they talked about their weird separate meetings with Heather, they would laugh.

No. No. The fact was that she had already laughed too much around Penelope. Too many things had been jokes. Just as too many things—personal things, loves that were maybe just self-gratification—had been tragedies. She had been lacking in motherly inhibitions and propriety and self-control.

Penelope had told Heather that she, Juliet, was still living in Vancouver. She had not said anything about the breach. Surely not. If she had, Heather would not have spoken so easily.

How did Penelope know that she was still here, unless she had checked in the phone directory? And, if she had, what did that mean?

Nothing. Don't make it mean anything.

She walked to the curb to join Gary, who had tactfully moved away from the scene of the reunion.

Whitehorse, Yellowknife. It was painful indeed to know the names of these places—places she could fly to. Places where she could loiter in the streets, devise plans for catching glimpses.

But she was not so mad. She must not be so mad.

At dinner, she realized that the news she had just absorbed had put her into a better situation for marrying Gary, or living with him—whatever it was that he wanted. There was nothing to worry about, or wait for, concerning Penelope. Penelope was not a phantom. She was safe, as far as anybody is safe, and she was probably as happy as anybody is happy. She had detached herself from Juliet and very likely from the memory of Juliet, and Juliet could not do anything but detach herself in turn.

But she had told Heather that Juliet was living in Vancouver. Had she said "Juliet"? Or "Mother"? "My mother"?

Juliet told Gary that Heather was the child of old friends. She had never spoken to him about Penelope, and he had never given any sign of knowing about Penelope's existence. It was possible that Christa had told him, and he had remained silent out of the feeling that it was none of his business. Or that he had forgotten. Or that Christa had never mentioned anything about Penelope, not even her name.

If Juliet were to live with him, the fact of Penelope would never surface—Penelope would not exist.

Nor did Penelope exist. The Penelope that Juliet sought was gone. The woman Heather had spotted in Edmonton, the mother who had flown down with her sons to get school uniforms, who had changed in face and body so that Heather did not recognize her, was nobody Juliet knew.

Did Juliet believe this?

If Gary saw that she was agitated, he pretended not to notice. But it was probably on this evening that they both understood that they would not be together. If it had been possible for them to be together she might have said to him that night:

My daughter went away without telling me goodbye, and in fact she probably did not know then that she was going. She did not know that it was for good. Then gradually I believe it dawned on her how much she wanted to stay away. It was just the way that she found to manage her life.

It's maybe the explaining to me she can't face. Or has no time for, really. You know, we always have the idea that there is this reason or that reason. And I could tell you plenty about what I did wrong. But I think the reason may not be something so easily dug out. More like some kind of purity in her nature. Yes. Some fineness and strictness and purity, some rock-hard honesty in her.

My father used to say of someone he disliked that he had no use for that person. Couldn't those words mean simply what they say? Penelope does not have a use for me.

Or can't stand me.

Juliet has friends—not so many now, but friends. Larry continues to visit and to make jokes. She keeps on with her studies. The word "studies" does not seem to describe very well what she does—"investigations" would be better.

And, being short of money, she works some hours a week at the café where she used to spend so much time at the sidewalk table. She finds this job a good balance for her involvement with the old Greeks—so much so that she believes she wouldn't quit even if she could afford to.

She keeps on hoping for a word from Penelope, but not in any strenuous way. She hopes, as people who know better hope for undeserved blessings, spontaneous remissions, or things of that sort. ♦

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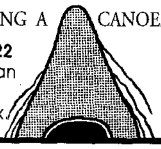

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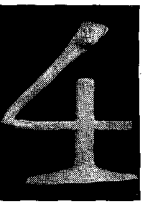

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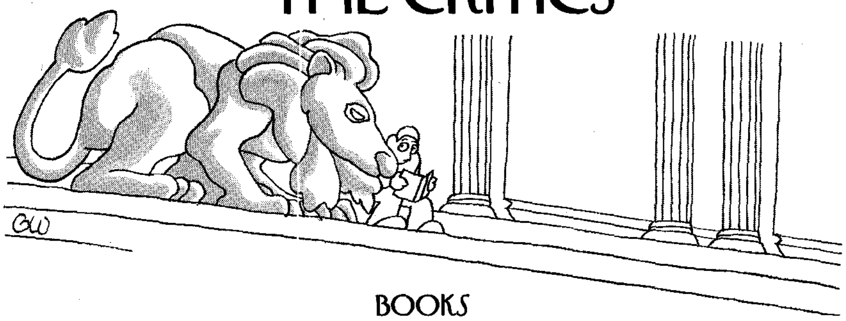


BOOKS

LOST IN TRANSLATION

The two minds of Bernard Lewis.

BY IAN BURUMA

In the course of a distinguished academic career at the University of London and at Princeton, Bernard Lewis has never been afraid to dip his scholarly hands in the muck of current affairs. A mentor to Henry (Scoop) Jackson in the early nineteen-seventies, and a friend to several Israeli Prime Ministers, Lewis has been especially sought after in Washington since September 11th. Karl Rove invited him to speak at the White House. Richard Perle and Dick Cheney are among his admirers. Lewis has championed his friend Ahmad Chalabi for a leading role in Iraq. And his best-selling book "What Went Wrong?," about the decline of Muslim civilization, is regarded in some circles as a kind of handbook in the war against Islamist terrorism. Lewis, in short, is a thoroughly political don, and if anyone can be said to have provided the intellectual muscle for recent United States policy toward the Middle East it would have to be him.

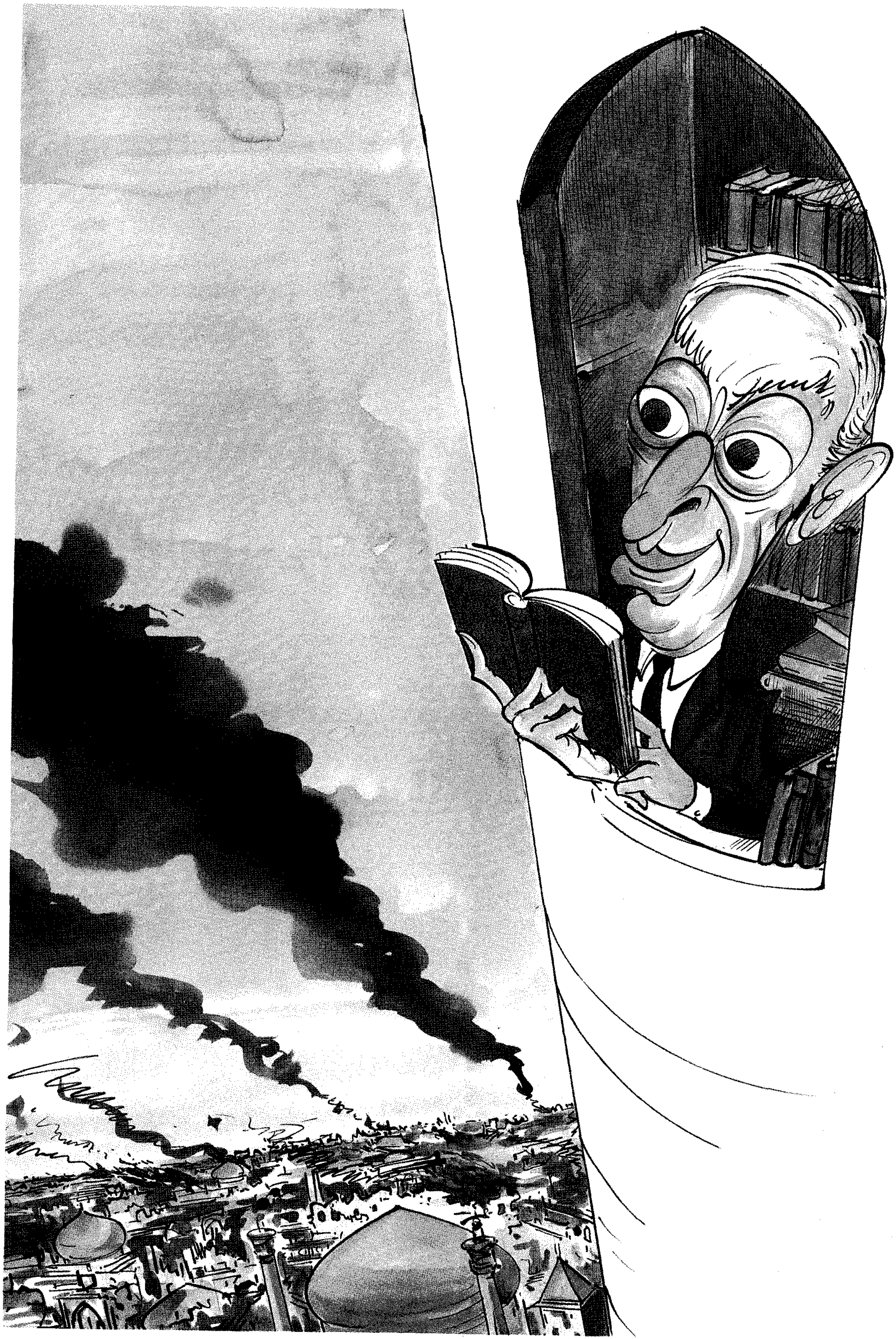
Lewis's latest book, "From Babel to Dragomans" (Oxford; $28), collects essays written over the past half century, on topics ranging from medieval interpreters (dragomans) and Jews in ancient Persia to what to do with Saddam Hussein. Yet, for a man who inspired the neoconservative firebrands, some of Lewis's ideas are surprisingly cautious. In 1957, he argued that the West should take as little action as possible in the Middle East, since "we of the West . . . should beware of proposing solutions that, however good, are discredited by the very fact of our having suggested them." In 1991, he wrote about the "age-old autocratic traditions" in the Arab world, and warned that there is "no guarantee" that efforts to democratize "will succeed, and even if they do, after how long and at what price." As late as 2002, in an interview with the Jerusalem *Post,* he struck yet another note of prudence. "Democracy is dangerous anywhere," he said. "We talk sometimes as if democracy were the natural human condition, as if any deviation from it is a crime to be punished or a disease to be cured. That is not true. Democracy, or what we call democracy nowadays, is the parochial custom of the English-speaking peoples for the conduct of their public affairs, which may or may not be suitable for others."

This is not exactly the stuff that excites readers of the *Weekly Standard,* or the hotter heads in the Pentagon. There is, however, another Bernard Lewis to be found in this book, a more strident figure who believes not only that the United States was too soft during the Vietnam War but that Middle Eastern dictatorships must be overthrown with force. Negotiating with the ayatollahs of Iran, and with other anti-American autocrats, is useless: "As with the Axis and the Soviet Union, real peace will come only with their defeat or, preferably, collapse, and their replacement by governments that have been chosen and can be dismissed by their people." As for the immediate consequences of turning such ideals into policies, Lewis, particularly in his more recent writings, is oddly insouciant. He said in 2001 that public opinion in Iraq and Iran was so pro-American that both peoples would rejoice if the United States Army liberated them. A year later, he repeated the message that "if we succeed in overthrowing the regimes of what President Bush has rightly called the 'Axis of Evil,' the scenes of rejoicing in their cities would even exceed those that followed the liberation of Kabul." Most Iraqis did cheer the demise of their tyrant, but Lewis could have offered some words of warning about what might follow the celebrations.

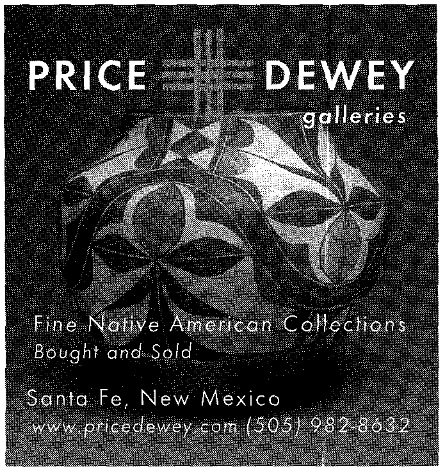
Nor was the fastidious scholar of Middle Eastern subtleties much in evidence when Lewis glibly used the attack on the World Trade Center to advocate a war on Saddam Hussein. In an article written days after the attack, he suggested that seeing the United States go to war with Saddam would be "the dearest wish" of other Arab regimes. Of course, the feelings of most Arab leaders were a little more complicated than that; and the chaos created by the American intervention is now causing almost universal alarm.

Critics of the war in Iraq, such as Rashid Khalidi, who holds the Edward Said Chair in Arab Studies at Columbia, attribute American failures in the Middle East to ignorance, or worse. Khalidi's latest book, "Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East" (Beacon; $23), is a polemic against European and American interventions in Middle Eastern politics. He is lucid, though somewhat conventional, in his denunciation of European colonialism and American "imperialism." On current affairs, he is the exact opposite of Bernard Lewis. He states that "virtually all of the thinking that underlay the planning for the Iraq war," such as the idea "that all Iraqis would welcome their liberators with open arms," was afflicted by "enthusiastic ignorance and ideological blindness." The charge of ignorance may be true of Richard Perle or the President himself; it cannot be levelled at Bernard Lewis. Few people in the United States know more about the Ottoman Empire than he does, and few are as steeped in the history of the Middle East. In arguments with ideological opponents—not least a famous 1982 exchange with the late Edward Said, in *The New York Review of Books*—Lewis has regularly displayed

GERALD SCARFE



An age-old resentment at being overtaken by the West, the historian Bernard Lewis says, fuels the Middle East's "Muslim rage."



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There is often a chasm, of course, between scholarly and political acumen. Misguided imperial aggression has regularly been advocated by experts of formidable erudition. Warren Hastings, who was impeached for his misconduct as governor-general of India in the late eighteenth century, had a formidable understanding of the subcontinent's cultures. Some of the most ferocious proponents of Japanese imperialism in China during the nineteen-thirties were keen scholars of Chinese civilization. Expertise is often beside the point in political arguments. Said's criticism of "Orientalist" scholars, among whom he counted Lewis, was not that they were ignorant but that they were arrogant and contemptuous of Muslims, and disguised political agendas with scholarship.

It is hard to deny that Lewis has a political agenda. But contemptuous? There is no reason to doubt his sincerity when he wrote, in a widely read essay, "Islam is one of the world's great religions. Let me be explicit about what I, as a historian of Islam who is not a Muslim, mean by that. Islam has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. It has taught people of different races to live in brotherhood and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable tolerance. It inspired a great civilization in which others besides Muslims lived creative and useful lives and which, by its achievement, enriched the whole world." These are hardly the words of a blinkered hater of "the Other." (Oddly, when he reprinted the essay in "From Babel to Dragomans," he omitted this passage.)

Lewis is at his best when he identifies Western double standards in dealing with the non-Western world. The *bien-pensants*, he says, are obsessed with Israeli violence against Arabs, while ignoring far worse brutality among the Arabs. Similarly, they denounced General Franco for his authoritarian rule in Spain but were relatively unmoved by Idi Amin's massacres in Uganda. There are, in Lewis's view, "two possible explanations of this silence. One is that white victims are so much more important than black victims that five Spaniards count for more than thousands of Ugandans. The other is that higher standards of behavior are expected from a European, even a Spanish fascist government, than from an African ruler. Either of these explanations would indicate a profoundly racist attitude."

And yet, when it comes to politics, a great scholarly mind, surveying the grand sweep of history from Olympian heights, can sometimes overlook matters closer to earth. Arbitrary colonial borders, coups engineered by British and American secret services, and Western manipulation of local despots, including Saddam Hussein, played some role in creating failed states and tyrannies. Lewis is no less horrified than his critics by the dictatorships that have destroyed civilized life in much of the Middle East. But his writings give the impression that British and French imperialism, United States interventions, and Israeli oppression of Palestinians are simply alibis for the region's political failings. The real reasons for the Middle Eastern mess, he suggests, are deeper, older, grander.

In a famous *Atlantic Monthly* article from 1990, reprinted in the current collection, Lewis speaks of "Muslim rage." The argument encapsulated by the term goes roughly as follows. The clash between Christendom and Islam has been going on since the Muslims conquered Syria, North Africa, and Spain. Muslims, at the height of their glory, in tenth-century Cairo, thirteenth-century Tehran, or sixteenth-century Istanbul, thought of themselves as far superior to the Christians and Jews among them, who were tolerated as second-class citizens. Since then, however, as Lewis puts it, "the Muslim has suffered successive stages of defeat." Turks reached Vienna in 1683 but got no farther. When the rampant West expanded its empires, European ideas penetrated, dominated, and dislocated the Muslim world. It was deeply humiliating for Muslims to be humbled by inferior Christians and Jews ("Crusaders" and "Zionists," in modern parlance). Traditional ways, which had produced so much glory in the past, were eroded and often destroyed by ill-considered experiments with Marxism, fascism, and national socialism. Out of political and cultural failure came this Muslim rage, directed against the West, the historical source of humiliation, and out of this rage came the violent attempts to estab-

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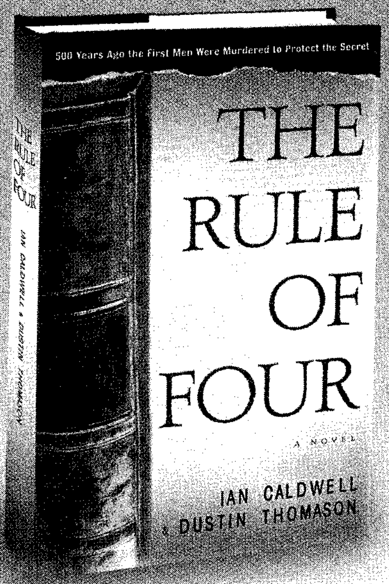
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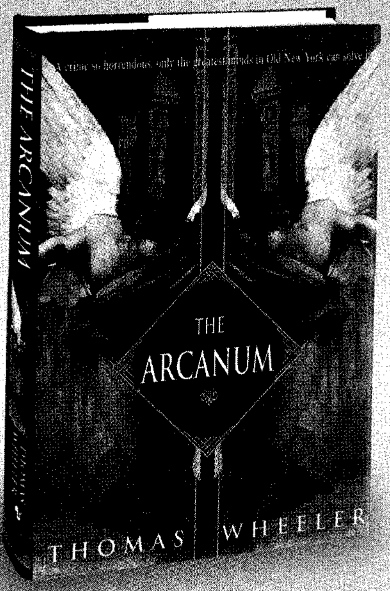
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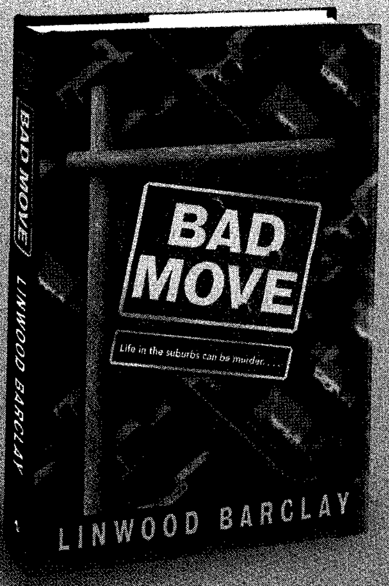
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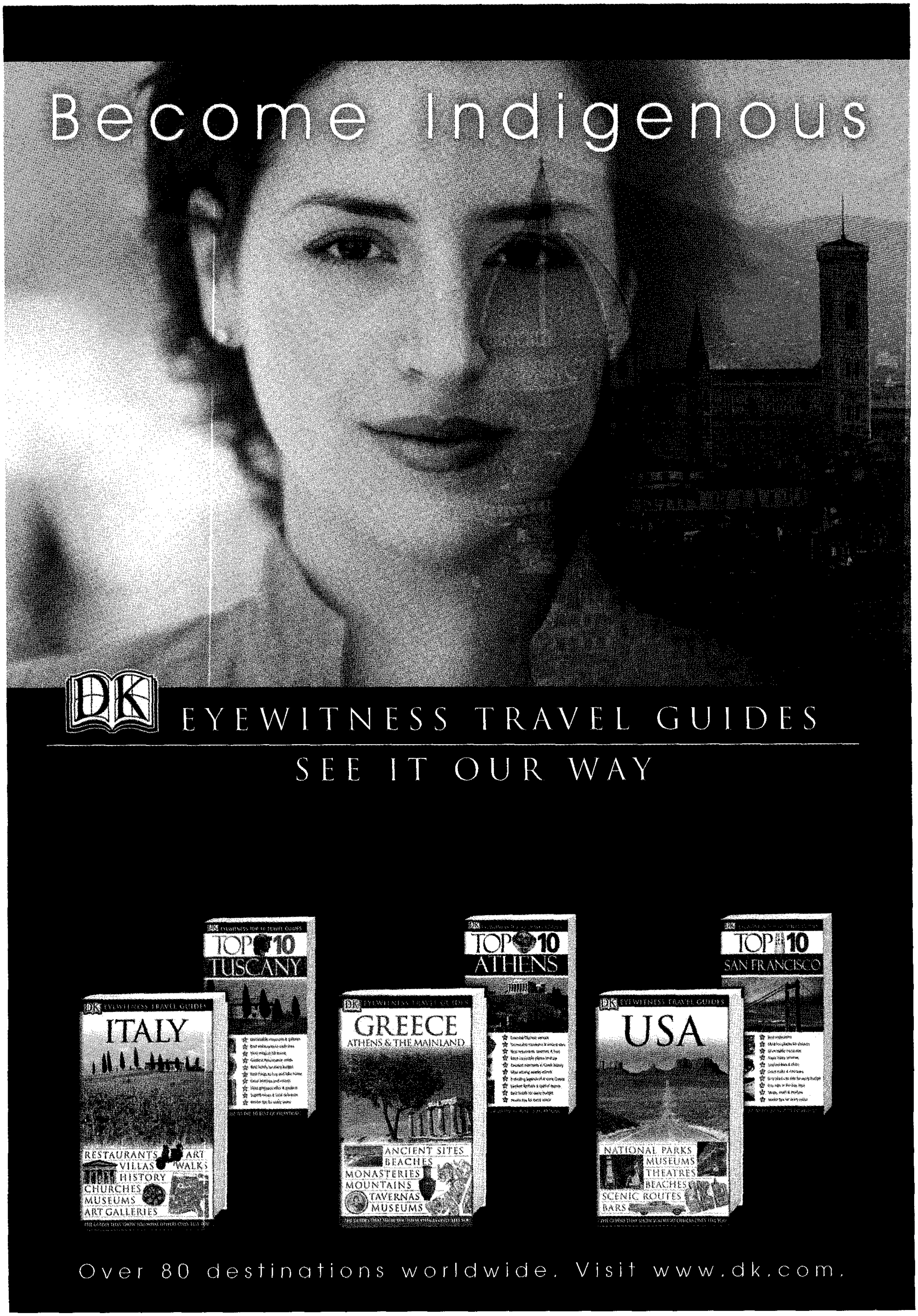

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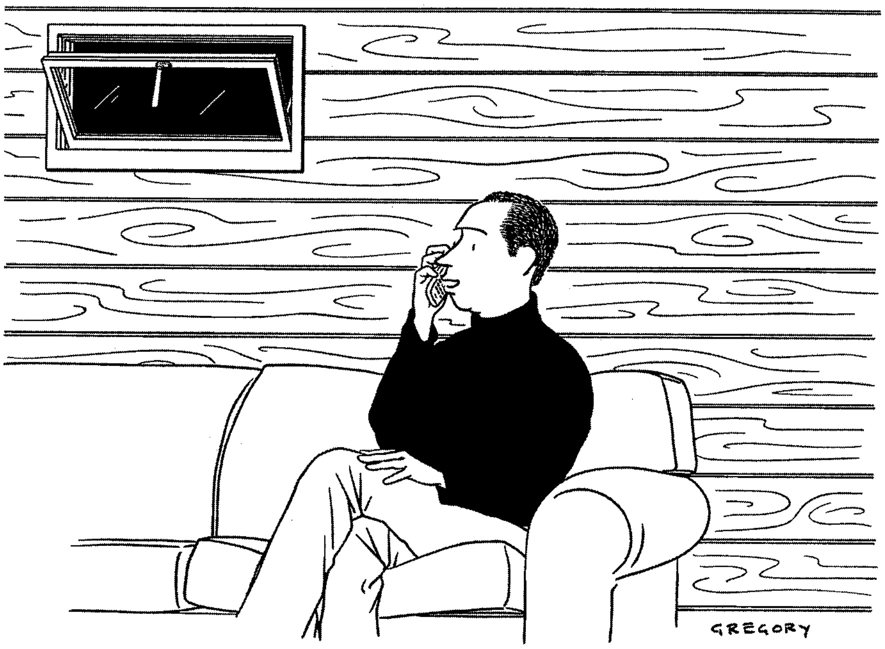

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lish a new caliphate through religious revolution. (It was Lewis, not Samuel Huntington, who introduced the phrase "clash of civilizations.") "In a sense," Lewis said on C-SPAN after the September 11th attacks, "they've been hating us for centuries, and it's very natural that they should. You have this millennial rivalry between two world religions, and now, from their point of view, the wrong one seems to be winning."

This broad analysis raises certain questions. First, who exactly is "the Muslim"? The last Islamist revolution was in Iran, but the rage Lewis describes seems to be confined mainly to Arabs. Turkey and Iran can't really be described as failed states, and the rule of Iran's mullocracy, now much loathed by most Iranians, arose not from some deep religious rage but, as Lewis acknowledges, from a modern revolutionary movement, supported initially by many Iranians who were not especially religious. There's something about Lewis's analysis of Islamic radicalism that reminds one of theories about the Third Reich that draw a straight line from Luther to Hitler.

Lewis claims that the lack of separation between church and state is the basis for Islamist revolutions. But in the non-Arab Muslim world, in places like Indonesia and Malaysia, religious ideologues have so far failed to make much headway. Indeed, more pragmatic Muslims in Indonesia are keen to separate politics from religion. Islamist radicalism is a threat in Pakistan, but this has more to do with a history of authoritarian rule by a small landowning class and military juntas than with any "millennial rivalry between two world religions." Pakistani political history, in some ways, bears more resemblance to that of Argentina and other parts of Latin America than to that of the Middle East.

Lewis's fixation on the millennial clash causes him to stretch his points beyond plausibility. He fastens on Yugoslav newspaper reports about young Muslims in Sarajevo plotting to establish an Islamic republic in Bosnia, apparently inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini. Whatever the Belgrade press might have said, however, most Bosnian Muslims were fired up by nationalism; they did not wish to be crushed by the Serbs. To characterize this as Muslim rage is as strange as describing Serb nationalism as Orthodox rage.

Even applied to Arabs, the notion of Muslim rage goes only so far; many political rebellions against Western domination have been secular, and Arab nationalism, or Arabism, though often

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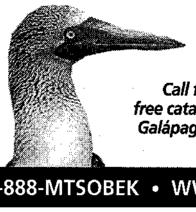

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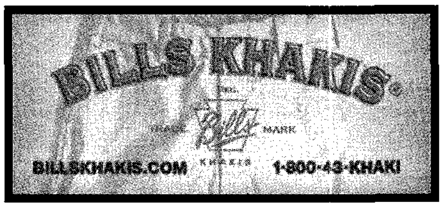

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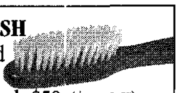

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associated with Islam, is sometimes at odds with it. National consciousness in the Arab world has been slow to grow, because nation-states barely existed in the past, and modern borders were mostly drawn by British and French colonial officers. Islam was one thing that most Arabs, from Syria to the Sudan, had in common, and religion could have been a source of political identification. What Pan-Arabism, some of whose founders were Christians, offered was an alternative, more secular, though not necessarily more democratic form of cohesion. Its failure led to a revival of Islamist dreams. And though Lewis may be right that Western interventions, of a covertly or overtly imperial nature, cannot adequately explain the nature of Muslim rebellions, the toppling by Western agencies of freely elected governments, and the support of dictators, cannot have helped the cause of democratic change.

Lewis identifies two mainstays of Muslim rage. One is the spectacle of infidels ruling over true believers. This, in the eyes of the believers, "is blasphemous and unnatural, since it leads to the corruption of religion and morality in society, and to the flouting or even the abrogation of God's law." This account may help explain the revolutionary aspirations of Al Qaeda, but it is not persuasive when Lewis applies it to Uighurs in China or to Kosovars. They rebel in response to social and political oppression, not to blasphemy.

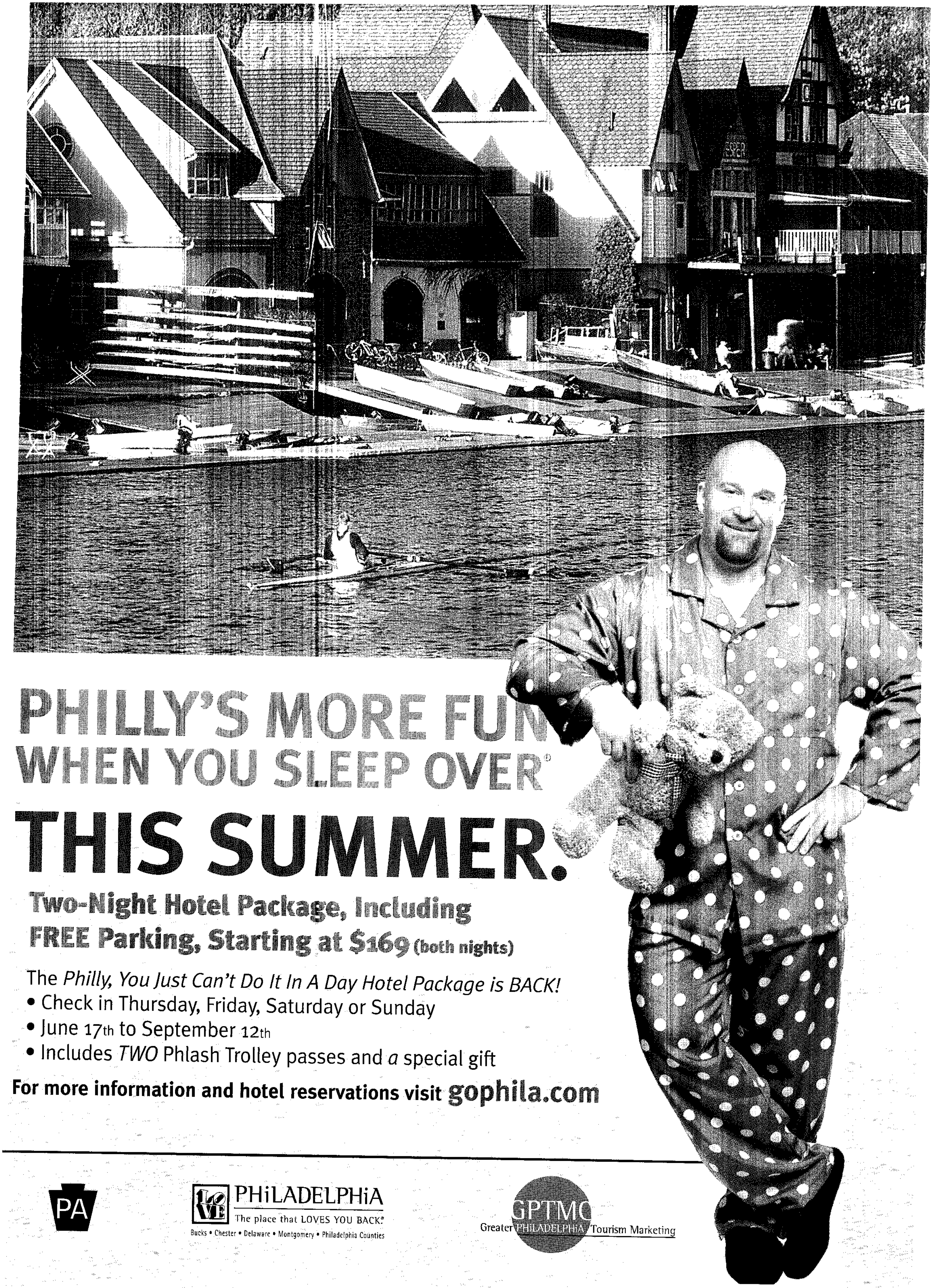
The second mainstay identified by Lewis is a more general one: secular modernity. The war on modernity "is directed against the whole process of change that has taken place in the Islamic world in the past century or more and has transformed the political, economic, social, and even cultural structures of Muslim countries. Islamic fundamentalism has given an aim and a form to the otherwise aimless and formless resentment and anger of the Muslim masses at the forces that have devalued their traditional values and loyalties and, in the final analysis, robbed them of their beliefs, their aspirations, their dignity, and to an increasing extent even their livelihood."

This certainly makes Muslim rage seem understandable, even justified. But Lewis's analysis is marred by an odd paradox. For those same angry and humiliated masses are, in Lewis's view, also deeply attracted to the temptations of the modern world: they all want sex, Nikes, and rock and roll. "Fundamentalist leaders are not mistaken in seeing in Western civilization the greatest challenge to the way of life that they wish to retain or restore for their people," Lewis writes.

Thus it is not really the masses—who would presumably love to be liberated by the United States—but the fundamentalist leaders who are enraged. So, of course, are some of the Christian fundamentalists waiting for Armageddon on our own television screens. In fact, the war on modernity, often associated with the Jews, or the West, or the United States, goes back centuries. German Romanticism, which later curdled into a murderous ideology, began as a reaction to the French Enlightenment, whose ideals were promoted with armed force by Napoleon's Grande Armée. Nineteenth-century Slavophiles in Russia resisted the modern ideas of the Westernizers and extolled the Russian soul. German Fascists in the nineteen-thirties denounced "Americanism." Japanese chauvinists in the forties embraced the idea that Japan was fighting a holy war against the wicked West.

Islamic extremists, it is plausible to conclude, have been drinking from that same poisoned well. Lewis rightly points out that their targets are the secular, corrupt, and oppressive governments in the Arab world, as well as the more enticing symbols of the West. So the question arises of why Lewis promoted a war against an Iraqi regime that was hated by religious extremists. Saddam Hussein's Baath Party certainly owed much to such old enemies of the liberal West as Stalinism and Nazism. He was also a brute. But he was a basically secular brute, whose will to power was hardly inspired by Muslim rage. In earlier days, he could have been excused for considering himself a friend of the West. Around the time of the Iran-Iraq War, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld certainly gave him that impression.

Why did Bernard Lewis ignore his own counsel that the West should proceed with caution in the Middle East, that democracy cannot be a quick fix, and that our proposed solu-



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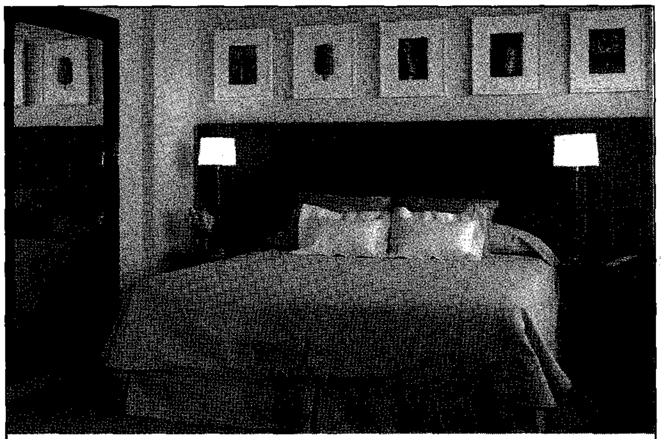

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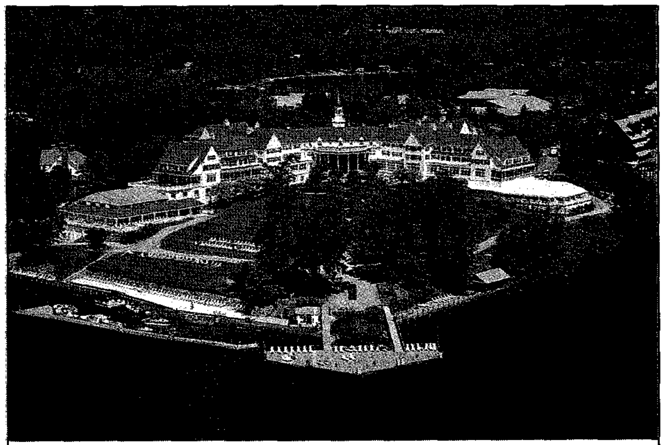

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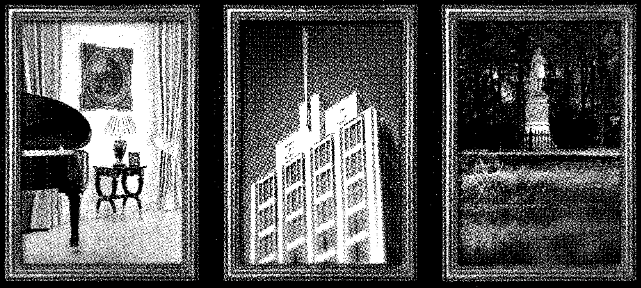
tions, however good, are "discredited by the very fact of our having suggested them"? Some put it down to Zionism: he is said to be part of the Israeli lobby, and his aim is to make Israel safe. Lewis does not hide that he is sympathetic to Israel, not only because he happens to be Jewish but because he thinks Israel is a relatively civilized, democratic country in a very rough neighborhood. Rather touchingly, Lewis, who has always admired the Ottoman Empire at its best, writes that "the Ottoman heritage is more perfectly preserved in Israel . . . than in any of the other countries of the region." But then, judging from Lewis's own writings, I would rather have been a Jewish subject of the Ottoman Empire than an Arab in territories occupied by Israel.

I doubt, in any case, that Zionism quite explains Lewis's role as a cheerleader for the war in Iraq. Nor does his supposed contempt for the Arab world do so. On the contrary, perhaps he loves it too much. It is a common phenomenon among Western students of the Orient to fall in love with a civilization. Such love often ends in bitter impatience when reality fails to conform to the ideal. The rage, in this instance, is that of the Western scholar. His beloved civilization is sick. And what would be more heartwarming to an old Orientalist than to see the greatest Western democracy cure the benighted Muslim? It is either that or something less charitable: if a final showdown between the great religions is indeed the inevitable result of a millennial clash, then we had better make sure that we win.

Lewis did say, in his Jerusalem *Post* interview, that he saw "the possibility of a genuinely enlightened and progressive and—yes, I will say the word—democratic regime arising in a post-Saddam Iraq." But, as has become increasingly obvious, an invasion by foreign armies is not the ideal way to bring this about. Here, Rashid Khalidi appears to be more clearheaded when he says that "unwanted foreign military occupation, or even the threat of it, is incompatible with democratization." Let us hope that he is wrong and Lewis is right. But it looks as though Arabs are crawling through yet another ring of Hell, prompted in part by the zeal of a man who claimed to wish them well. ♦



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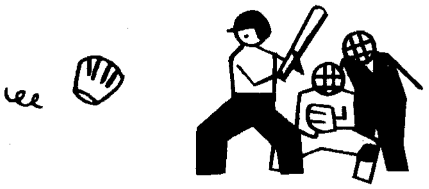
BRIEFLY NOTED

The Rule of Four, *by Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason (Dial; $24).* A Princeton student has only twenty-four hours to complete his senior thesis—hardly the nail-biting stuff of thrillers, except that the thesis in question purports to solve the mystery of an erotic fifteenth-century allegory littered with ciphers and algorithms. (In the wake of the immensely popular "The Da Vinci Code," there appears to be no shortage of medieval codes waiting to be cracked by intrepid scholar-detectives.) As the student races to meet his deadline, mayhem engulfs the campus: a chase through steam tunnels beneath the grassy quads, an inferno at the school's toniest eating club, and nude frolics in the snow (this last not fiction but a real Princeton tradition). The authors, two recent Ivy League grads, keep up a frantic, somewhat exhausting pace, but the most riveting action sequences take place inside the mind, as the hero wrestles with the manuscript.

American Desert, *by Percival Everett (Hyperion; $24.95).* While on his way to commit suicide, Ted Street, an untenured English professor and philandering husband, is beheaded in a car accident. Worse, he wakes up at his own funeral, his head clumsily stitched on his neck and his mouth sewn closed. From there, Ted embarks on a wide-ranging cruise through the American landscape, as he is kidnapped by a cult convinced that he is a devil; picked up by the military to be experimented on as a prototype of the perfect soldier; and sheltered by another cult, which worships him as a messiah. While the outlandish premise imparts a good deal of comic energy, Everett's customary sarcastic and intelligent wit is oddly lacking. Much of his satire of fanaticism—the charismatic cult leader with a stockpile of weapons, secret government plots—feels worn, and, despite all the talk of resurrection, the stiff prose never perks up.

Wondrous Strange, *by Kevin Bazzana (Oxford; $35).* Opinion on the eccentric Canadian pianist Glenn Gould is polarized between idolatry and detestation. Bazzana's portrait—the most balanced yet—ingeniously provides contexts for Gould's behavior, situating his hermeticism in the dour Anglo world of mid-century Toronto. A keen deflater of myths, Bazzana shows that Gould, often assumed to be asexual or gay, had a number of quasi-girlfriends, though his need for solitude always came first. Similarly, although it's true that he sued Steinway, alleging injury from an employee's effusive greeting, among friends handshakes were common. Still, those for whom the eccentricities are half the fun will find endless delight in the meticulous accounts of Gould's diet, hypochondria, and near-suicidal driving. "It's true that I've driven through a number of red lights on occasion," he once said, "but on the other hand, I've stopped at a lot of green ones but never gotten credit for it."

Father Joe, *by Tony Hendra (Random House; $24.95).* Hendra, a British satirist, is perhaps best known as the band manager in the movie "This Is Spinal Tap." His spiritual memoir begins with his affair, at the age of fourteen, with a married woman. Discovered by her husband, a terrified Hendra agrees to accompany him to a monastery on the Isle of Wight. There he meets Father Joe, whose gigantic ears complement his keen emotional intuition. Hendra is overwhelmed by Father Joe's gentle prodding and by the timelessness of the monastic day, and so begins the great tension in his life—whether to join the abbey or remain in the larger world, a world that eventually includes life on the fringes of the Monty Python crowd. Hendra loses his faith and develops some bad habits—drink, drugs, screenwriting—but he never loses his connection to Father Joe, and the soul-scraping honesty of his meditation on faith and friendship is a testament to the monk's continuing influence.



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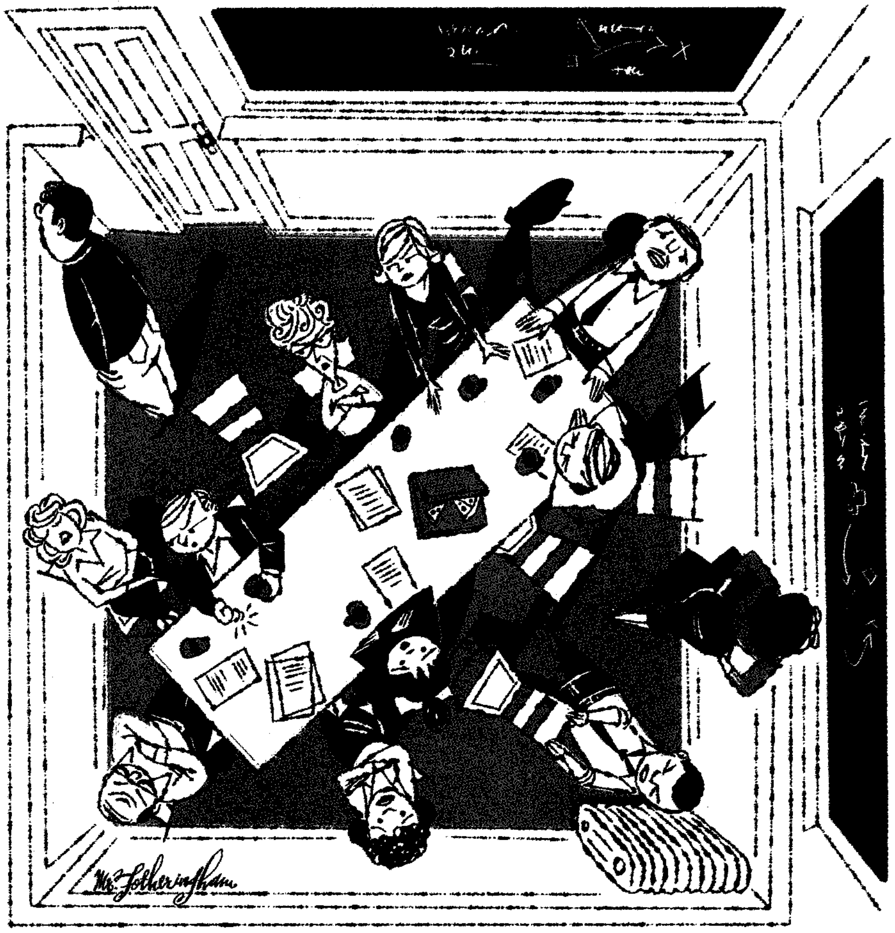
THE UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Delivering a verdict on "The Jury."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

I'm so ashamed. Two new series are going head to head this summer on Tuesdays at nine. One of them, "The Jury," on Fox, is a serious drama made by people who have won Oscars, Emmys, and Peabody Awards, which focusses on juries in New York City's criminal court making big decisions about defendants on trial for things like murder; the other, "Summerland," on the WB, is a synthetic, credulity-straining melodrama from the schlitz brewery (that's schlock + glitz) of Aaron Spelling, about three kids from Kansas who are taken in by their fashion-designer aunt in Southern California after their parents die in an accident. And I prefer the second one.

"Summerland" doesn't have an idea in its head, and "The Jury" does, but the latter show's preoccupations—the dynamics among any twelve people sitting in a room together (*locked* in a room together, in fact), the impossibility of knowing the whole truth about a case, the all too human imperfection of the judicial process—don't add up to more than the sum of their parts. They're like plants that never bloom, despite having been carefully watered and tended.



The ladies and gentlemen of "The Jury" get down to cases.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

"The Jury" 's credits are as impressive as they come; the series was created by Tom Fontana, Barry Levinson, and James Yoshimura, who, along with Jim Finnerty, serve as executive produc-

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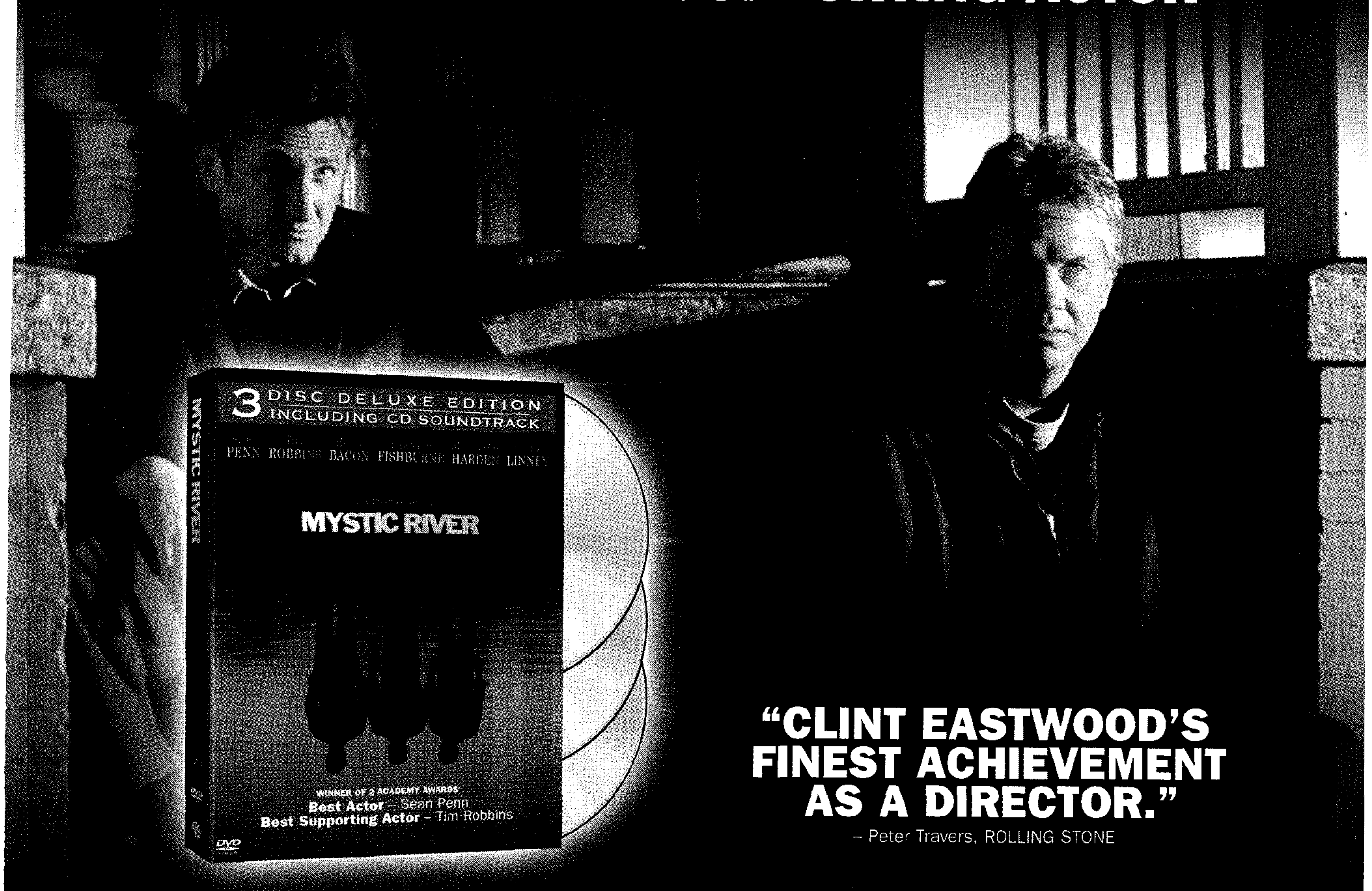
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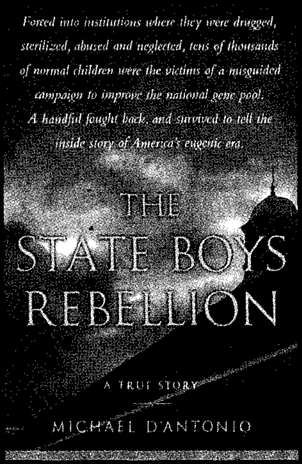
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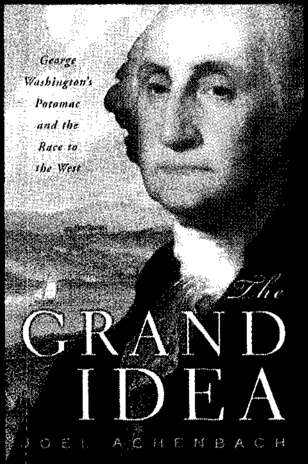
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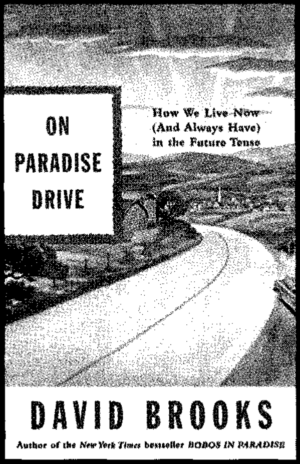
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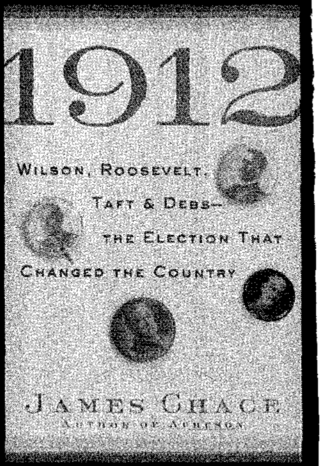
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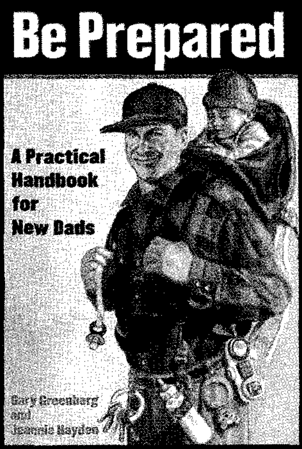
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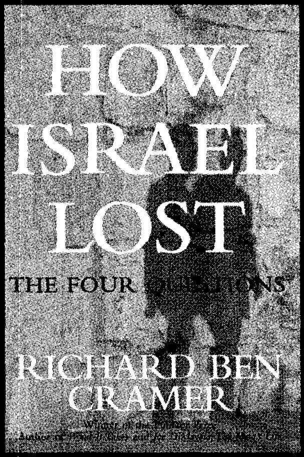
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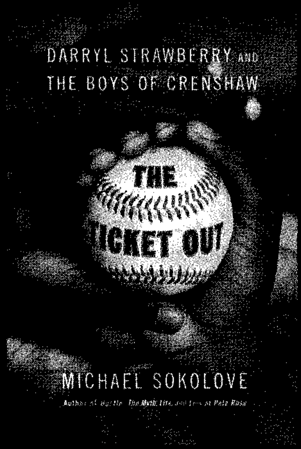
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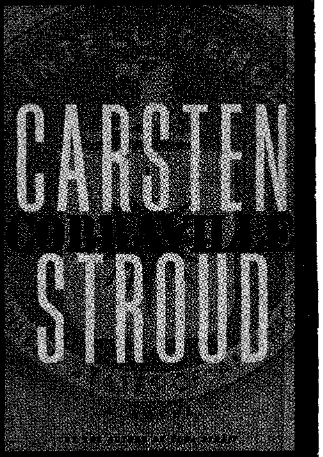
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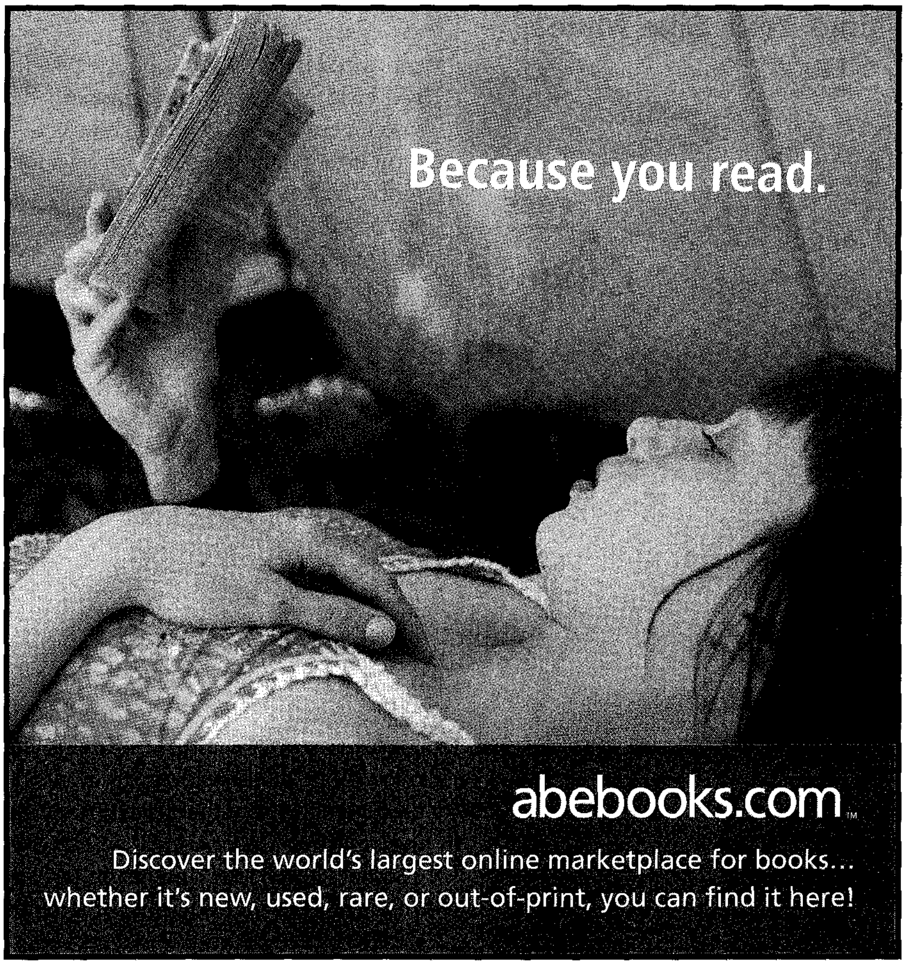
ers. Levinson, Fontana, and Finnerty were executive producers of "Oz," which Fontana created and wrote for, and of "Homicide: Life on the Street," which Fontana and Yoshimura wrote for. (Levinson, Fontana, and Finnerty were also the executive producers of "The Beat," a police drama that ran on UPN for just a month in 2000—on Tuesdays at nine, as it happens.) Each episode of "The Jury" is centered on the disposition of one crime, and is anchored by the back-and-forth of the deliberating dozen, whose personalities and quirks start to become evident to us the moment they sit down, if not before. As they review the evidence and ask questions, we at home see quick shots of the crime scene and of the courtroom testimony, but we are never shown anything that would tell us any more than what the jury knows. The point of "The Jury" (which begins on June 8th, with a two-episode première) is that there is much that jurors can't know about a crime, even when it appears to be an open-and-shut case, and that we must constantly question our ability to judge even as we are duty-bound to judge. All is ambiguous, and potentially troubling, and even the concept of reasonable doubt leaves room for interpretation. But these issues are nothing new, either to anyone who has ever served on a jury or to anyone who has ever watched police or legal dramas on TV, where characters involved in the judicial process wrestle frequently and visibly with their consciences and with their decisions. Everybody has seen the attorney who, when it's all over, sits at his desk and stares thoughtfully into the middle distance—that is, into his own heart and soul. And there's always the juror who on leaving the courthouse momentarily looks skyward before melting into the crowd, feeling simultaneously a little lighter for having done his civic duty and a little weightier for knowing that he has been a factor in changing someone's life forever. (This is how the classic of the genre, Sidney Lumet's "12 Angry Men," ends: with Henry Fonda, who has served with heroic modesty, descending the courthouse steps and checking the weather as he rejoins the bustling society whose principles he has just so nobly upheld.)

Though the crimes in "The Jury" are different each week (the first three episodes all involve murder cases), I'm not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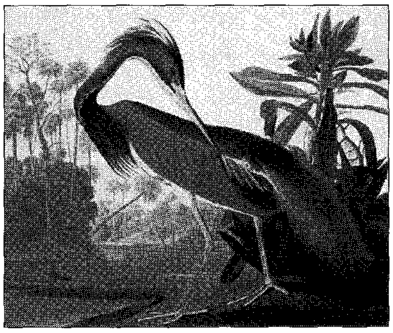

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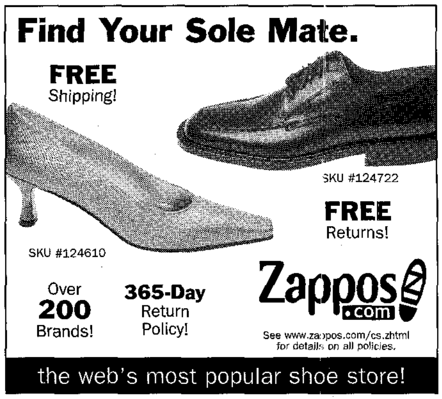
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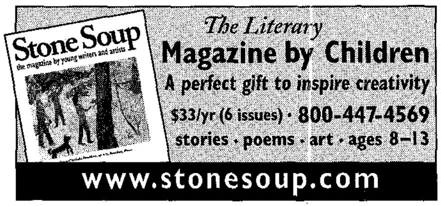
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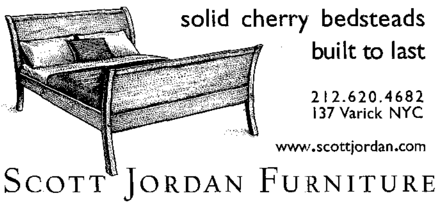
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convinced that the accretion of episodes will yield ever deeper insights into the system, especially since the show is to a great extent handicapped by its own formula. In each episode, we see enough of the process to realize that there's a great deal of arbitrariness inherent in the outcome; what we don't see is how each case is arbitrary in its own way, since we don't get to know the jurors well enough, or see enough of the details of each case. The jurors are never shown outside the jury room, except when they're having lunch or taking a break, and we have no clue why they, of all the possible candidates, were picked to begin with. We see little bits of telling behavior—one guy being an impatient, bossy jerk (there's always one), a woman rolling her eyes at something he says, people calling each other names and accusing each other of inconsistency or bad faith, or breaking the rules about discussing the case outside the jury room—but the effect is of watching an acting class perform an exercise: You have forty-four minutes to portray a typical juror without appearing to be stereotypical—on your mark, get set . . . go! There are some recurring characters in the show—the cases take place in the same courtroom in every episode, with the same judge (played by Levinson himself), the same attorneys, the same bailiff (a "lovable" goofball), and the same court officer, but none of them stand out, except for Levinson, who is good at capturing that combination of remote friendliness and unpredictable irritability peculiar to judges. So there is very little to hold on to from week to week.

Because "The Jury" is unsatisfying on a visceral level, one would like, at least, to be able to say that it gives the viewer food for thought. But in none of the first three episodes could you possibly figure out what the ultimate truth of the crime is—you just sit there dumbly waiting for the last shot, when you are finally shown what "really" happened. Your own efforts to get to the bottom of the case are, by design, unrewarded. (And yet, dumb or not, viewers are invited to weigh in, "American Idol"-style, before the end of the show.) It's not just the scripts that leave you in the dark; technically, the show labors against itself as well. Its relentlessly jittery camerawork and frenzied editing (there are twenty-five shots in the first thirty seconds of the pilot episode) are meant, I think, to induce a feeling of confusion that approximates the confusion jurors often feel when presented with conflicting evidence. And they do. But that's not the whole picture. As everyone knows, jury duty can be simultaneously incredibly boring and incredibly interesting, and the creators of "The Jury" have succeeded in conveying only half of the experience.

I don't really mean to set up "Summerland" in opposition to "The Jury." For that there would be a very stiff sentence. But I can't help marvelling at how good some of the WB family dramas are at hitting both teen-agers and adults in their soft spots—the parts of us that cling to the childish fantasy that there's no place like home and that you can, at the end of the day, count on your family to be the source of everything in life that's important and wonderful. They make this fantasy seem so real, and attainable. (Another Aaron Spelling show, "7th Heaven," proffers the same promise of familial Shangri-La.) Oh, sure, these families have problems—the three kids in "Summerland" who move in with their "fun aunt in California" all have difficulty adjusting, as does the fun aunt herself, Ava Gregory (Lori Loughlin, known to some from her years on "Full House")—but by the end of the pilot, as you gather up the wads of used Kleenex next to you on the couch, you just know that everything will work out. The added attraction of "Summerland" is that it's set in a come-hither beach house, a cozy bungalow nestled in a hillside a stone's throw from the ocean. (It's sort of a "Beach Party of Five.") And, if that isn't sufficient to make you feel that your own life is a terrible misfire, there are Ava's three supportive housemates. Oh, sure, they squabble, but their friendship is as strong as steel, and one of them, a handsome and perfect ex-boyfriend of Ava's, Johnny (Shawn Christian), who, naturally, still loves her, immediately and happily, and without being asked, steps in to help Ava with the parenting. I actually really hate this show, and I will probably never miss an episode. ♦

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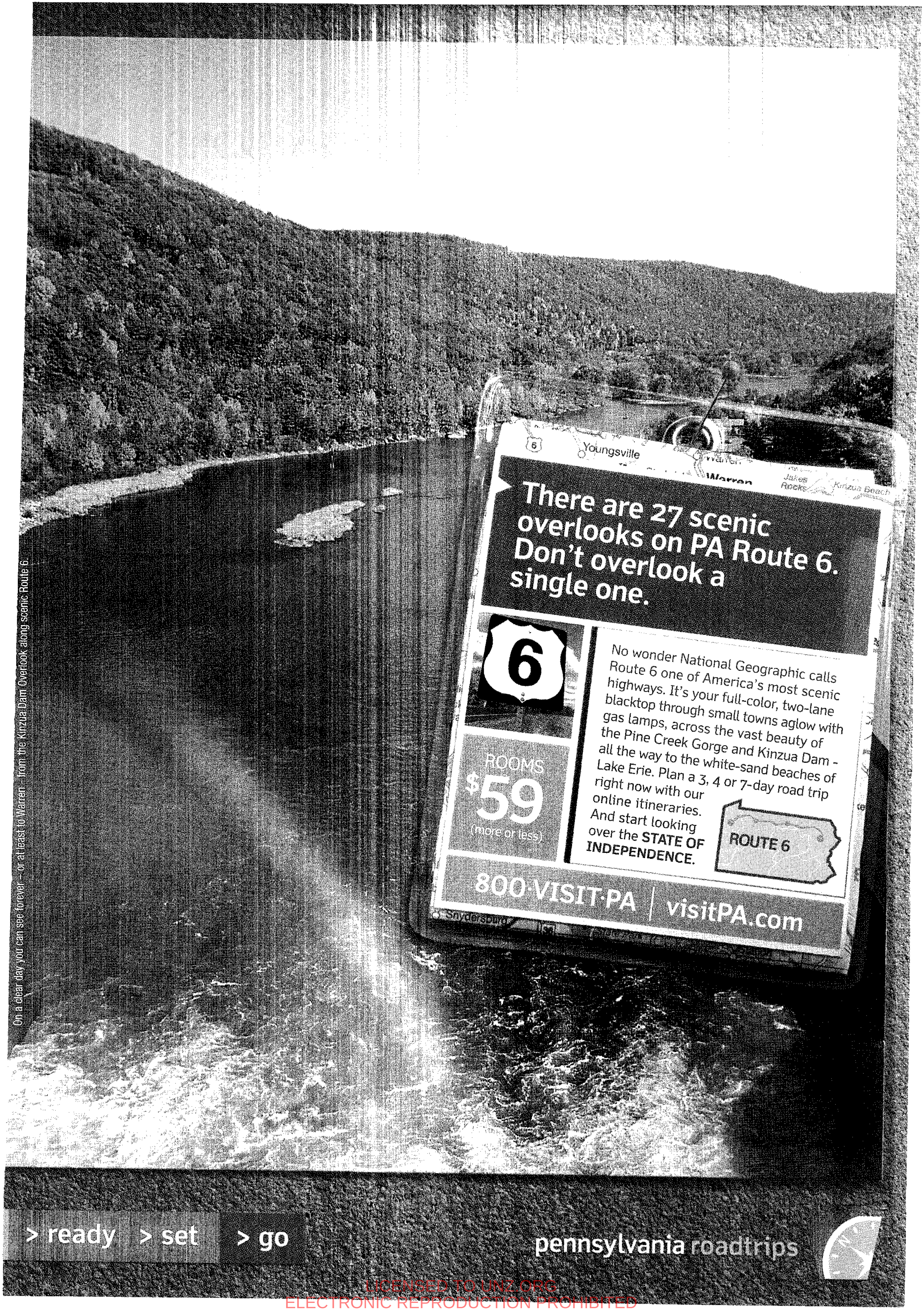

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

SMORGASBORD

An Ingmar Bergman retrospective.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The social life of the moviegoer, rarely effervescent, is about to lose more of its sparkle. Film Forum is presenting a six-week retrospective, through July 1st, of the work of Ingmar Bergman. Not to plan a pilgrimage to Houston Street would be graceless, although we should resign ourselves to the fact that, like many of Bergman's characters, we will make the journey alone. There may be a way of persuading casual acquaintances to come along for a festive double bill of "Frenzy" and "Crisis," but, if so, it's news to me.

Bergman, happily, is alive today, although viewers hoping that he might spring a surprise appearance, bounding onstage after the screening, should prepare to be disappointed. Publicity has never been his forte; if you want self-revelation from Bergman, go to the work. He was born on July 14, 1918, into a well-to-do Swedish family. His father, Erik, was a pastor in the Lutheran church; Ingmar was raised in the company of women—his mother, Karin, naturally, but also a fond maternal grandmother. He himself has been married five times. Among the most striking measures of his art (rivalled only, in this regard, by the Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi) is the prominence that Bergman gives to women in his films. We are left in no doubt, as man after man reveals himself to be a fool or a flounderer, that the world is electrified by the fervor of female intelligence. Behind this tendency, as behind so much in life, lies an aunt. It was Ingmar's Aunt Anna who, in the late nineteen-twenties, gave his brother Dag the Christmas present of a cinematograph, which Ingmar soon acquired by swapping it for a hundred toy soldiers. That was the sparking of his passion for motion pictures.

Bergman studied at Stockholm University and directed his first play in 1938. Since then, his industry has been unflagging; last year a two-hour film, "Sarabande," showed on Swedish TV. He long ago earned the nickname of the "demon director," such are the demands that he makes on his performers. There is no mistaking the look of a Bergman picture, or even the sound of it. Close your eyes, or avert them from the subtitles, and you find yourself swept up afresh in the sway of his dialogue. It may be unintelligible, but, like the libretto of an opera in an unfamiliar tongue, it makes a mysterious music of its own, and the blend of clucking and lulling in the Swedish voice seems wonderfully apt to Bergman's mood.

That sound is one of the constants that cause Bergman's movies, in all their variety, to bind themselves into a compendium. Another is the repertory company that, like Woody Allen, he has loyally gathered around him. As the films unfurl, the delight of finding the same players—Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Bibi Andersson, Harriet Andersson, and, less heralded but no less vital, Gunnar Björnstrand—grows ever more consoling, surviving even the bleakest plots. All of which means that, rather than interleaving your Bergman-watching with other pictures, you should think about taking him neat—denying yourself the new Harry Potter movie, for instance, until you have plowed through two hundred and eighty-two minutes of "Scenes from a Marriage" (1973). The Film Forum season is not complete: there is no room for two of the films that Bergman made in Germany, "The Serpent's Egg" and "From the Life of the Marionettes"; or for a lost-looking Elliott Gould in "The Touch" (1971); or for the nine soap commercials that Bergman directed in 1951. Still, with thirty-three films on show, even scowling skeptics will be forced to concede the breadth, as well as the intensity, of his achievement.

And what of a novice? Were you to wander, without any warmup, into the double bill of "Summer Interlude" and "Summer with Monika" on June 10th, how would you respond? For a start, the

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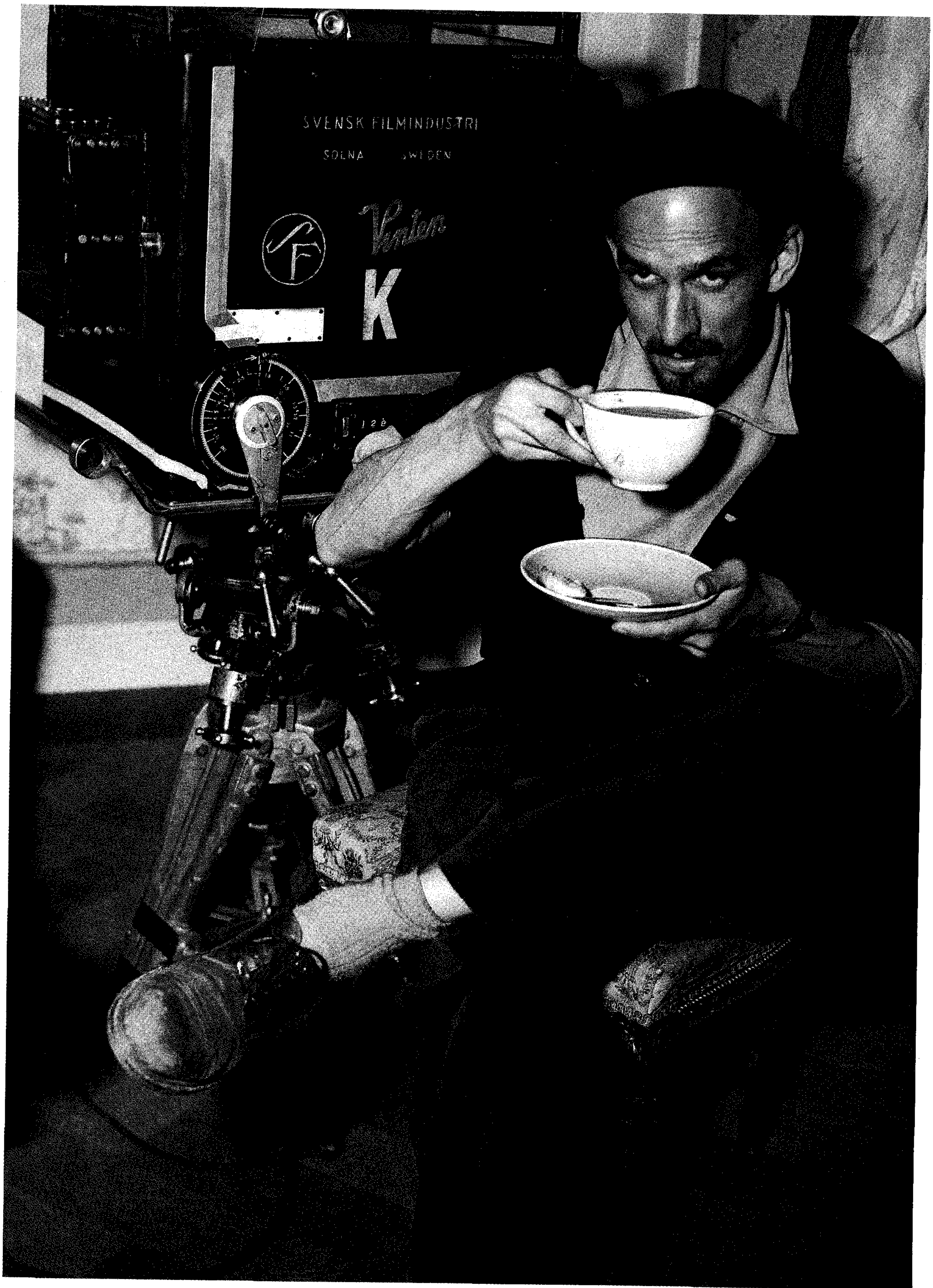
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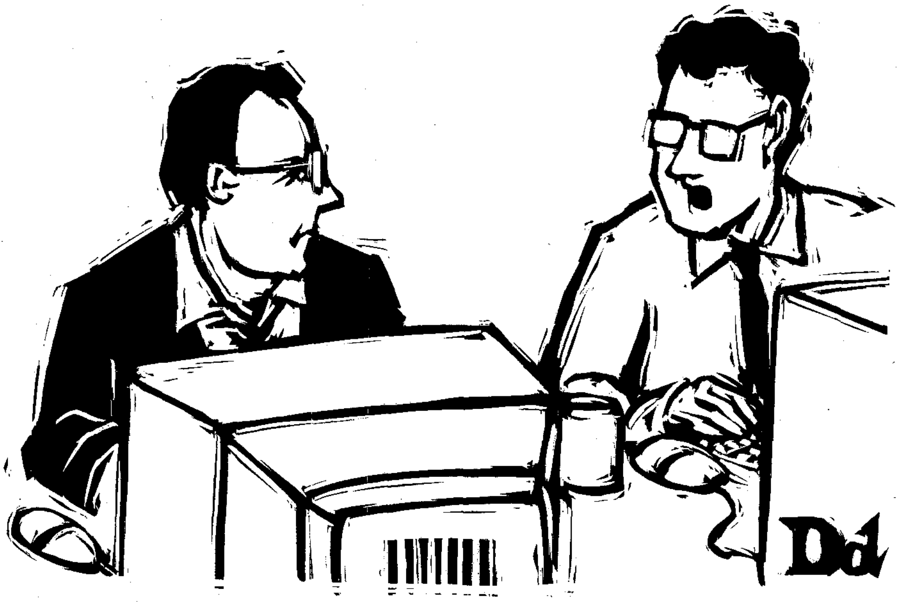
Bergman on the set in the late nineteen-forties. There is no mistaking the look of a Bergman picture, or even the sound of it.



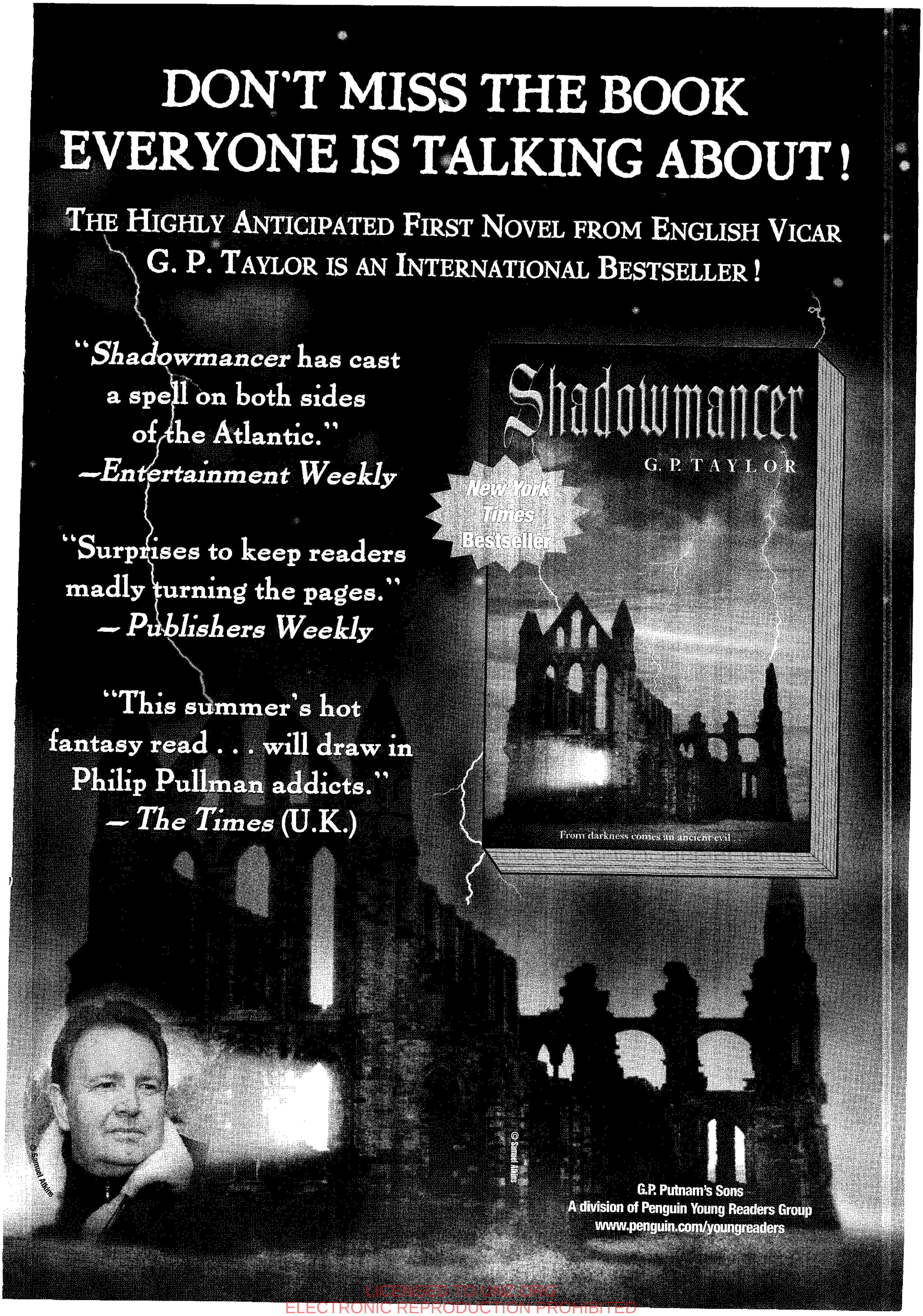
"Something was definitely lost when we went from being hunter-gatherers to browser-purchasers."

titles might come as a shock. Bergman is so instantly linked with the Nordic landscape, and with the daunting demeanor of those who suffer there, that these buoyant films, dating from 1951 and 1953, are liable to bliss you out with their spasms of uncowed defiance. Both are love stories; both show a boy and a girl (one should say a man and a woman, but that is precisely what they don't yet want to be) cutting free of city life and fleeing over water into the wilds. The setup could be lifted from Maupassant, and, indeed, there is a tang of Frenchness in the air—look at Marie (Maj-Britt Nilsson) in "Summer Interlude," stirring in the morning in her island hut, singing herself awake, slipping from nightgown to swimsuit, picking up a fishing rod, and skipping out into the day's embrace. This unchained blitheness is not just modern, it is preëmptively modern. Audiences would have to wait another five years to watch Brigitte Bardot disport herself with similar glee in "And God Created Woman," and a further three years for Marie's tomboyish verve—go to bed with whatever takes your fancy, get up with a bounce—to resurface in the Jean Seberg of "Breathless."

"Summer with Monika" is more brazen still. In fact, in the United States it was marketed as a form of skin flick, largely because the heroine (Harriet Andersson) strips beside the sea. The idea that Sweden was inherently sexy, that it fostered a culture of looseness in morals and dress, was a misapprehension that would linger for the next two decades. Yet the Anglo-Saxon gigglers, sneaking into theatres to catch Andersson in her clinging sweater, were not completely wrong. Bergman would be no more adept a pornographer than he would be at filming hip-hop, but his camera did stare at the human surface with an intentness unmatched since von Sternberg rhapsodized over Marlene Dietrich, and we are encouraged to wonder—as we gaze upon Monika's smile and bare shoulders, at the masklike glare of Ingrid Thulin in "Wild Strawberries" (1957), and, supremely, at the interchanging faces of Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann in "Persona" (1966)—what these skins conceal. They are stretched tight across the soul, and, however impassive, they reverberate with its lusts and its drumming discontents.

This is the Bergman who needs rescuing—who deserves to be fêted less for his anguished attitudes than for the lithographic clarity of his compositions, which somehow remain feathery and breathed-upon even at their most austere. Like Wagner and Proust, Bergman suffers woefully from his admirers. When I pick up Jörn Donner's "The Personal Vision of Ingmar Bergman" (1964) and find "Summer Interlude" described as "above all a profound intellectual analysis," or read in Frank Gado's "The Passion of Ingmar Bergman" (1986) that Bergman's heroine, in the same film, is "not an extrusion from his throbbing node of Oedipal complexity but a fully developed, independent being," I ask myself: Is it possible to see so much in a film that you end up not seeing the film? Bergman is not a metaphysician, or an analyst; he chose celluloid, not paper, on which to inscribe his obsessions, and what is most neurotic in him is not the quality of his worrying, or even the throbbing of his node, but the intensity of his wish to register the world, plus a small throng of its inhabitants, through the force of physical impact.

A test case would be "Through a Glass Darkly" (1961), the first of a trilogy. ("Winter Light" and "The Silence" came two years later.) Again it stars Harriet Andersson, but the free spirit of Monika has faded from view. She now plays a schizophrenic, living with her husband, brother, father, and, worst of all, herself, on a barren island. There is no avoiding the pains undergone in this picture, and, to be fair to Frank Gado, his exhaustive Freudian reading of Bergman seems far from groundless. Not only is the schizophrenic named Karin, after the director's mother, but so is the Knight's wife in "The Seventh Seal" (1957), the girl who is raped and murdered by medieval hoodlums in "The Virgin Spring" (1960), the pastor's wife in "Winter Light," and, even more troubling, the sister in "Cries and Whispers" (1973) who mutilates herself sexually with a shard of glass. Nor are we allowed to forget that Bergman was the child of a minister; together with his other films of the period, "Through a Glass Darkly" submits God (often absent, never nonexistent) to lament and imprecation and, sometimes, to a spitting rage. Nevertheless, this is not a chunk of dramatized theology, and it is never more wrenching than when deprived of words. Wait for the end of a dying day, as Karin's long-suffering husband turns down the oil lamp beside their bed and the camera moves unhurriedly to the window, the focus shifting from the lace that edges the curtains to the bewildering light of the sky beyond. Nothing the script has to tell us about hope or despair has a hun-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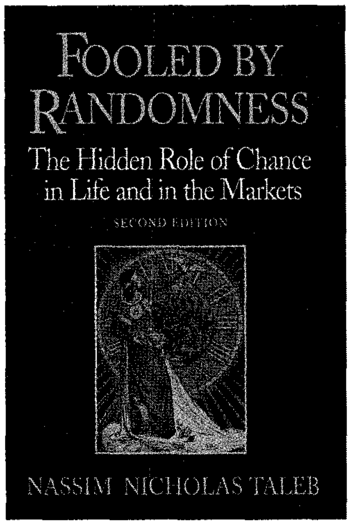
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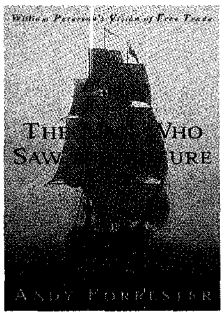
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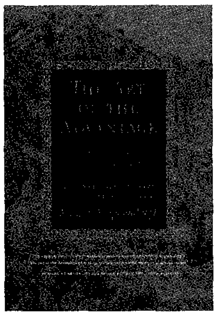
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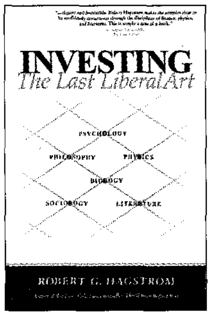
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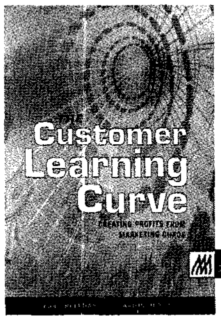
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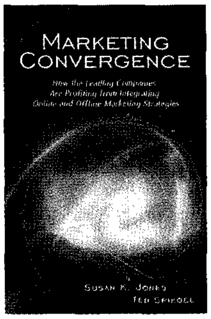
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TEXERE *The Intersection of Insight and Innovation* dredth of the power of that glimmering.

Such beauty suggests an ideal way to get in training for the season at Film Forum. The weekend before your first Bergman movie, take a flight to Stockholm and, once there, a ferry out to the islands. This will not be hard, the capital itself being composed of fourteen islands, and the archipelago to the east offering twenty-four thousand more. Nowhere in Europe can you quit civilization and find yourself in wilderness with such speed, and that transition alone is a key to the dreams of escape in early Bergman, and to his later nightmares about what we may discover in our isolation. Think of Monika and her beau, the camera pitching slightly on the prow of their boat as it chugs through the city and out into open water; think of the two women, the silent patient and her chattering nurse, who hole up on a stony isle in "Persona"; think, finally, of Bergman, who has based himself since 1966 on that same hideaway, Fårö, a hundred miles south of Stockholm, and who chose it, two years later, as the site of "Hour of the Wolf" and of his coruscating war film "Shame." Thanks to jet lag, you will have a chance to follow the arc of a Swedish summer evening. All the passages in Bergman, you will realize, where the characters are too hazy and restive, and the heavens too bright, for any hope of repose are not just fanciful conceits or loaded metaphors. They are weather reports, and when the girl in "Summer Interlude" recalls, "There was no time to sleep," she is referring not only to endless sex, fine proposition though that is, but to the sacramental whiteness of the nights.

That is something to keep hold of as you surrender to Bergman's art. Like Samuel Beckett, he is never as abstruse as you have feared. Both men are earthed in particular places, and both reach unflinchingly back into the scenes of their childhood and youth. Bergman, it is true, guides us through infernal regions that are closed to most filmmakers, and he has been much mocked in the attempt, but let nobody tell you that he does not share—with Truffaut, with Fellini, with Welles—the sharp, regretful taste of everyday experience. See the fire smoke rising and trembling through the roof of the house in "The Virgin Spring"; give yourself up to the gusty, sun-brightened picnic of strawberries and milk in "The Seventh Seal"; feel the mother splash water on her sleep-warmed neck and breasts in "The Silence"; and listen to the words of Pablo, the servant of Don Juan, who is summoned from the underworld in "The Devil's Eye," Bergman's little-known comedy of 1960. Pablo seduces the wife of a minister, and then, sorrowful and sated, falling to his knees, he addresses her thus:

> First, I'll finish off that half-dug vegetable patch I saw. Then I'll sit and let the rain fall on me. I shall feel wonderfully cool. And I'll breakfast on one of those sour apples down by the gate. After that, I shall go back to Hell. ♦

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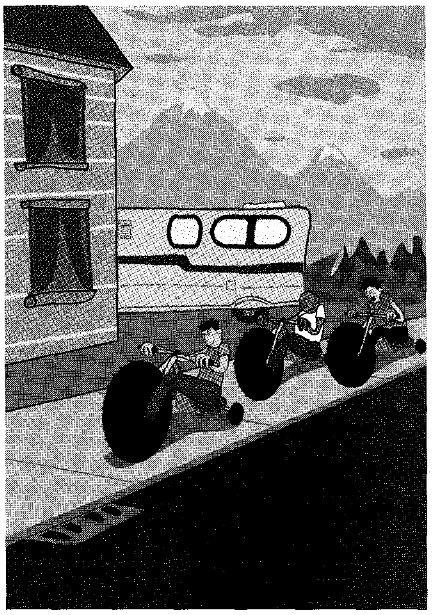
HOLIDAYS

OUT OF THE WOODS

It was an awful house. A broker would have called it a charming Swiss chalet; what it should have been called, really, was a dingy A-frame, mud-brown, damp, afflicted with an air of unrelieved gloom. An ad might have claimed that it was nestled in the Oregon mountains—in fact, an ad did claim that it was nestled in the Oregon mountains—but would fail to mention that it was nestled in what was possibly the only cramped, cluttered, suburban subdivision in the Oregon mountains. It was probably when we saw a gang of children furiously pedalling their bright-orange-red Big Wheels up and down the sidewalk—Big Wheels? A sidewalk? In the mountains?—that we realized that this vacation house, which we had rented for a four-day getaway, might not be quite as dreamy as it had sounded.

This was the first actual vacation that my boyfriend and I had ever taken together—the first official, grownup type of vacation, rather than our more usual short-term residences on friends' sofas. We weren't very old, and neither was our relationship, and the visit to the mountains was a watershed moment to see what it felt like to have a place of our own. The chalet had sounded ideal. It was also inexpensive, and since we had only a couple of nickels to rub together, we thought it was quite a find.

The inside of the house did seem tolerable. Granted, it was a worn-out, weary place with lots of aches and pains—floorboards that complained, mattresses that wheezed, windows that shrieked when you pushed them open—but it was decent shelter. We walked around, opening cupboards and checking behind doors, taking inventory. Bedroom, fine. Bleak little kitchen, fine. Living room, fine. Bathroom, we must have missed it. We walked through the house again, opening every door a second time, then a third. There appeared to be no bathroom. Had either of us inquired when we arranged to rent the house whether it had a bathroom? Of course we hadn't—who would? It would have been like asking if the place had, say, a roof. We glanced out the kitchen window. In a mangy patch of yard, there appeared to be a heap of two-by-fours, which revealed themselves, upon investigation, to be the remains of an outhouse that must have been blown down in a storm. There was no righting it; the structure hadn't just toppled—it had exploded. So the house had once been equipped with a bathroom-type facility, although the fact that it was an outhouse seemed like something a broker might have wanted to mention.



MAXIMILIAN BODE

I had been a pretty good Brownie in my day, and my boyfriend had been an avid camper, so the idea of peeing in the woods was not new or discomfiting to either of us. However, we were not in the woods. We were in a kind of Levittown, relocated to the lovely Oregon mountains. There was no leafy glade nearby; there was no private little thicket. Instead, there was a family just a few yards away in the house next door, with a whale of an R.V. parked in the driveway and a swing set that gave the kiddies a good view of our comings and goings. Furthermore, the weather was turning grim, the sky dropping lower, the clouds starting to spit a chilly rain, all of which made our moldy mud-brown dream-vacation home seem moldier and browner and more bathroomless by the minute.

Town was a couple of miles away. There was a Gas-N-Eat or a Stop-N-Fuel, or whatever it was called, at the end of the main drag. It had bathrooms, but it was one of those joints where you had to go in to the cashier and ask for a key and then go back outside to the bathroom, a cold, dimly lit concrete-block cubicle that a truck-stop prostitute might have found homey and familiar. We were, of course, not in a position to fuss. We made use of the Petrol-N-Go, had dinner in town, and then stopped in again, just to be safe. In the morning, we threw jackets on over our pajamas and made a beeline for the gas station. The rain, intermittent the day before, had turned apocalyptic. We holed up in the house for the afternoon, limiting our liquids. We had counted on the changing shifts of cashiers to keep our very frequent visits from being totted up, but the cashiers, evidently, chatted among themselves. By the third day, racing in at seven for our morning constitutional, wet coats akimbo over our nightclothes, we felt—how to put this exactly?—not welcome. Even the house had turned against us, beading up with wetness on nearly every surface, little rivulets of rain threading their way across windowpanes and walls: so much water, and none of it running. But we were. With one more day coming to us, we finally gave in. We packed our damp belongings, stopped in for a last visit at the gas station, and headed home.

—*Susan Orlean*

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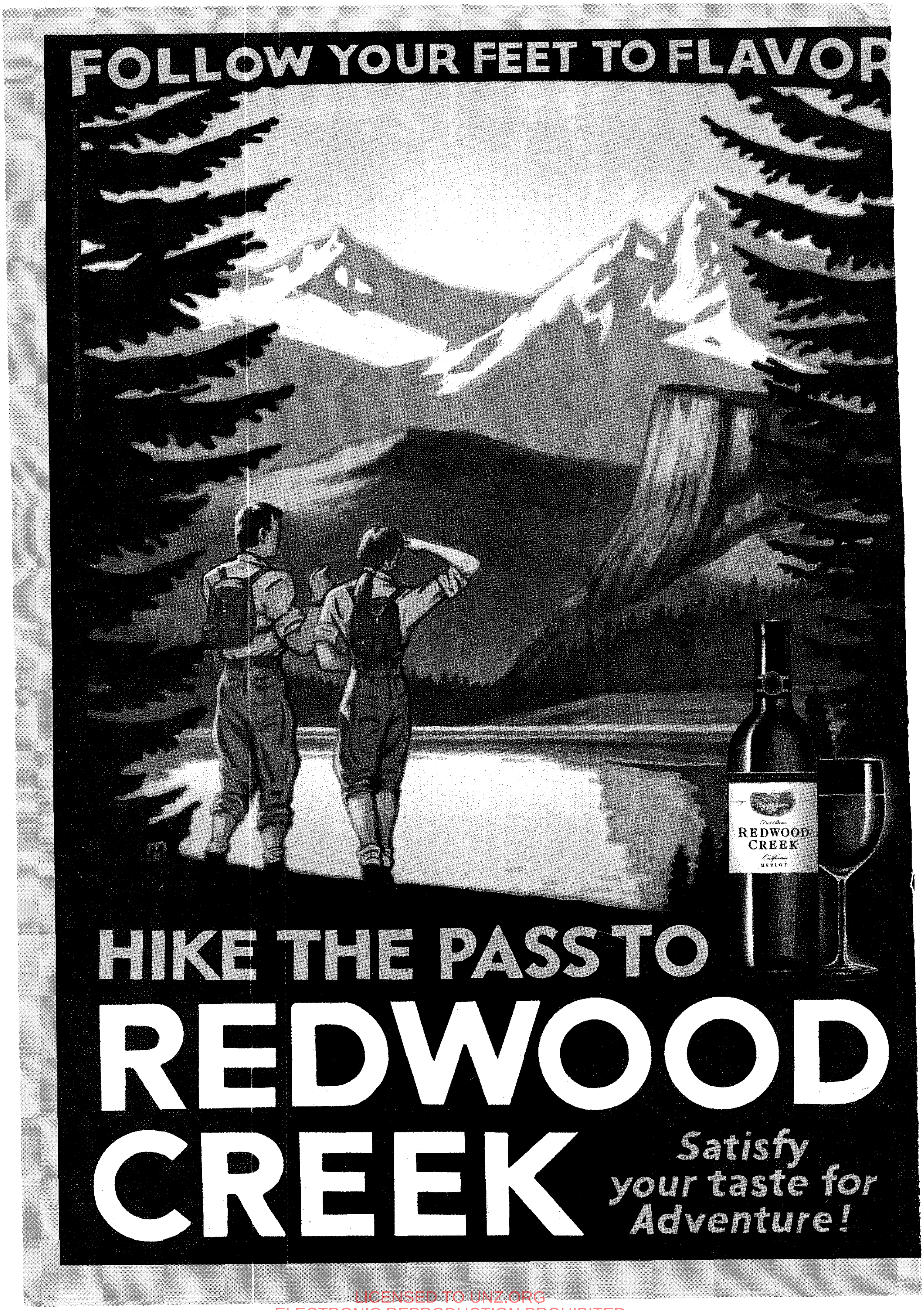
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